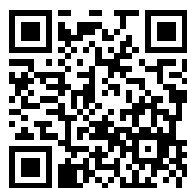

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DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1919—1939

EDITED BY

E. L. WOODWARD, M.A., F.B.A.

*Professor of Modern History in the University
of Oxford*

AND

ROHAN BUTLER, M.A.

Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford

ASSISTED BY

MARGARET LAMBERT, PH.D.

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PREFACE

DURING the period from January 20 to April 3, 1939, covered by this volume the evidence of fact compelled His Majesty's Government to give up immediate hope of general European appeasement, and to attempt the formation of a 'common front' in Europe against further German aggression. Early in the year there were reports that the next aggressive move by Germany would be an attack on the Netherlands. Chapter I of the volume deals with the correspondence arising out of these reports and the decision of His Majesty's Government that they would regard such an attack as a *casus belli*. The chapter includes a survey of the general position in Slovakia.

Chapter II contains further estimates of German intentions, correspondence with regard to German-Polish relations, and a long despatch from H.M. Embassy, Moscow, on the probable effects upon the Soviet régime if the U.S.S.R. were involved in war. Chapters I and II also include correspondence about the proposed guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia.

Chapter III, after covering the events immediately preceding the German repudiation of the Munich Agreement, describes the invasion of Czecho-Slovakia and the suppression of Czech independence. The chapter ends with the instructions to Sir N. Henderson to deliver a protest to the German Government against their action and to state that this action was devoid of any basis of legality.

Chapter IV deals with Anglo-Italian relations, and, in particular, with the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards Italian claims against France, during the period between the visit of the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax to Rome and the announcement of the British guarantee to Poland.

Chapters V and VI show the development of British policy after the German repudiation of the Munich Agreement. Chapter V covers the first stage of the negotiations initiated by His Majesty's Government with a view to organizing mutual support among the European States threatened by the Axis Powers. The documents thus begin with correspondence arising out of a report that the Roumanian Government had received a German ultimatum. The chapter then deals with the British proposals for a Four-Power Declaration, the unwillingness of the Polish Government to be associated with the Soviet Government in such a Declaration, and the Anglo-French endeavours to meet the situation created by the Polish refusal. Chapter VI continues this narrative and describes the circumstances in which His Majesty's Government decided to offer a guarantee to Poland. The last documents in the chapter follow the announcement of the guarantee on March 31, 1939.

The seven appendixes to the volume give material supplementary to the text. They include additional correspondence on the situation in

Memel in December 1938, which was held over, for reasons of space, from publication in Volume III of this Series.

The conditions under which the Editors accepted the task of producing the volumes in this Collection, i.e. access to all papers in the Foreign Office Archives, and freedom in the selection and arrangement of documents, continue to be fulfilled.

The Editor is again grateful to the staff of the Reference Room of the Foreign Office Library, and to other officials who have helped in tracking documents and providing information. He also wishes to record once again the valuable co-operation of the Assistant Editor, the Hon. Margaret Lambert, Ph.D., and of Miss A. W. Orde, B.A., who has shared at all stages in the preparation of the volume. Miss E. McIntosh, M.B.E., continues to be responsible not only for the Table of Contents but for general assistance which has much lightened the Editor's task.

February 1951

E. L. WOODWARD

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II. Report by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin on his visit to Germany and interviews with German statesmen, February 19-26, 1939	597-610
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CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER I

The European situation: estimates of German intentions: the Danzig question: Herr Hitler's speech of January 30: the International guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia (January 23–February 9, 1939).

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 17	Jan. 22	Reports that French Government agree to increase Anglo-French loan to Czecho-Slovakia to £8 millions.	1
2	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 28 Saving	Jan. 23	Summarizes comments in 'National Zeitung' on visit of Czecho-Slovak M.F.A. to Berlin and on advisability of Czecho-Slovakia preserving friendly relations with Germany.	1
3	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 95	Jan. 23	Refers to No. 1 and transmits copy of Memorandum received from Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreeing to loan of £8 millions to Czecho-Slovakia.	2
4	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 33	Jan. 24	Reports information from Czecho-Slovak Minister regarding Czecho-Slovak M.F.A.'s conversation with Herr Hitler: tenor of conversation left M. Mastny with impression that Herr Hitler was not fully confident of ability of Czecho-Slovak Government to eliminate anti-Nazi and Jewish elements from country.	3
5	TO MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 37	Jan. 24	Transmits, for information of President, information at disposal of H.M.G. regarding Herr Hitler's intentions for the future and measures being taken by H.M.G. to counteract them. Prime Minister due to make a speech at Birmingham on January 28: suggests that if President were disposed to make any public announcement it might be more valuable if he were to do so before January 30.	4
6	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 37	Jan. 24	Reports information received from Private Secretary of M.F.A. regarding Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit to Berlin: discussions had been confined to (1) political relations between the two countries, (2) question of minorities, and (3) economic collaboration.	7
7	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 38	Jan. 24	Reports information from Private Secretary of M.F.A. regarding measures being taken by Czecho-Slovak Government to solve Jewish problem.	8
8	MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 39A	Jan. 25	Refers to No. 5 and reports that similar message received through United States Embassy was already being considered by President.	9

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
9	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 31 Saving	Jan. 25	Reports observations of German Ambassador regarding internal situation in Germany and Italian claims against France. Count Welczeck now optimistic about future.	9
10	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 45	Jan. 25	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador who was given a brief report of what had passed at Geneva in relation to Danzig question and Committee of Three: Ambassador referred to recent conversation at Berchtesgaden between M. Beck and Herr Hitler and spoke of assurance given to M. Beck that Germany had no intention of confronting Poland with any <i>fait accompli</i> .	11
11	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin	Jan. 25	Letter to Mr. Strang commenting on improved tone of German press and suggesting action which might be taken to show appreciation of this.	12
12	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 18	Jan. 26	Reports conversation with Private Secretary to M.F.A. regarding possible unpleasant repercussions on loan negotiations as a result of Czecho-Slovak Government's intentions regarding Jews.	13
13	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 10	Jan. 26	Reports German Trade delegation shortly coming to Moscow for purpose of negotiating an agreement.	14
14	TO MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 8	Jan. 26	Refers to agreement concerning financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia and to immediately following telegram which contains text of letter signed by Governor of National Bank and Financial Minister: letter not for publication.	14
15	TO MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 9	Jan. 26	Refers to No. 14 and transmits text of letter referred to therein.	14
16	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 10	Jan. 26	Reports information from Ministry of Foreign Affairs that German delegation headed by Herr Schnurre would pass through Warsaw shortly <i>en route</i> for Moscow. Poland welcomed development politically although economically it might hamper her own trade discussions with U.S.S.R.	15
17	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 9	Jan. 26	Reports arrival of German M.F.A. on Jan. 25 for a stay of two days: summarizes press reports regarding speeches made by M. Beck and Herr von Ribbentrop at banquet at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	15
18	TO SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 4	Jan. 26	Message from Sir A. Cadogan regarding rumour that Germany might be contemplating an invasion of Holland: suggests that subject be explored tentatively with M. Colijn and endeavour made to elicit likely attitude of Netherlands Government and people in event of German threat materializing.	16

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
19	To SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 17	Jan. 26	Records result of discussions in Paris of Prime Minister and Secretary of State with French Ministers on January 10, and in Rome with Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano on January 12, regarding joint guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia by four Munich Powers: instructions to concert with French colleague and inquire attitude of German Government informing them of Signor Mussolini's views.	17
20	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 37	Jan. 26	Message for Sir A. Cadogan communicating information from Hon. Secretary of Anglo-German Fellowship, that Herr Hitler intended, in event of Italy not receiving satisfaction from France, to attack in the West in March and that principal object of Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw was to square the Poles.	18
21	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 26 Saving	Jan. 26	Instructions to inform French Government of view expressed by Signor Mussolini regarding question of guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia as recorded in No. 19.	18
22	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 110	Jan. 26	Transmits despatch and explanatory memorandum by Military Attaché concerning decree issued on January 19 regarding training of recruits, both before and after their military service, under the control of the S.A.	19
23	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 113	Jan. 26	Transmits copy of despatch from Military Attaché giving a résumé of military situation of Germany as it appeared to be developing.	22
24	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 39	Jan. 26	Reports interview with M. Litvinov prior to presentation of Letters of Credence: M. Litvinov professed his usual optimism on score of any Ukrainian adventure by Herr Hitler, but expressed view that Poland was in for a bad time: German delegation arriving in Moscow in a few days to discuss trade agreement.	24
25	To MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 10	Jan. 27	Transmits substance of communiqué issued to press on January 27 regarding Agreements signed between Czecho-Slovak Government, French Government and H.M.G. concerning financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia.	25
26	MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 43	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 5 and reports conversation with Secretary of State regarding information contained therein: considers it unlikely that President will make any public statement.	27
27	SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 1	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 18 and reports conversation with M.F.A., who produced a telegram from Netherlands Minister in Washington containing information received from President regarding possibility of attack by	27

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		Germany on Netherlands: expresses personal view that Netherlands would do everything possible to avoid hostilities but would fight to last ditch if attacked.	
28 MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 44	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 26 and discusses attitude of President and Secretary of State who are anxious to do what they can to help but are afraid of going too far ahead of public opinion and thus losing control of Congress.	29
29 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 38	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 20 and transmits comments of Military Attaché on Herr Hitler's intentions: agrees in general with Military Attaché's observations.	30
30 SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 2	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 27 and reports wish of M.F.A. to see Secretary of State in England; suggests February 14.	31
31 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 12	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 17 and reports impressions regarding Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw. General view among colleagues that Germany desired as far as possible to secure neutrality of Poland while at same time endeavouring to bring Poland under influence of Berlin-Rome Axis and thus isolate Roumania.	31
32 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 11	Jan. 27	Reports that M.F.A. would prefer to visit London for meeting of Committee of Three towards middle or end of March rather than at beginning: considers it unlikely that there will be any change in situation at Danzig before middle of March.	32
33 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 14	Jan. 27	Reports information from French Minister regarding his visit to Herr von Ribbentrop: latter generally friendly but spoke with considerable bitterness of attitude of H.M.G.	33
34 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 13	Jan. 27	Reports that communiqué issued after Herr von Ribbentrop's visit merely repeated desire on both sides to continue collaboration in work of appeasement.	33
35 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 14	Jan. 27	Refers to No. 13 and reports information from German Embassy regarding possible German-Soviet Trade Agreement: no indication as yet of any impending political or military contacts.	33
36 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 41	Jan. 27	Reports information from Soviet Embassy that German Government would send a small mission to Moscow with object of developing trade and renewing credits within framework of existing Trade Agreement.	34
37 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 5 Saving	Jan. 27	Reports information from Polish Ambassador that Herr Hitler had given Polish M.F.A. an 'official assurance' that Ukraine was not a live issue and could only become one for Germany if U.S.S.R. showed signs of disintegrating.	35

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
- 38	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 75	Jan. 27	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding general international situation, possible Soviet commercial agreement with Germany and Anglo-Soviet Commercial Treaty.	35
39	SIR N. BLAND The Hague	Jan. 27	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan referring to No. 27 and enclosing copy of telegram from Washington in full: hopes meeting between M. Patijn and Secretary of State may be arranged.	36
40	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 18 To SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 5	Jan. 28	Transmits impressions formed by H.M.G. regarding Herr Hitler's plans for near future and their views and intentions in event of these materializing: instructions to inform French (Belgian) Government accordingly.	37
41	To MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 44	Jan. 28	Instructions to communicate to State Department, for information of President, attitude likely to be adopted by H.M.G. in event of an unprovoked German attack on Holland.	40
42	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 35 Saving	Jan. 28	Refers to No. 19 and reports that draft communication to German Government was left with French Ambassador on January 27: Ambassador raised question of Franco-Czecho-Slovak Pact and said that he thought guarantee would have to contain a statement to effect that Pact automatically lapsed.	41
43	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	Jan. 28	Minute recording main points of interest in telegrams from French Representatives abroad regarding German and Italian activities, received from First Secretary of French Embassy.	41
44	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 243	Jan. 28	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding possibility of German aggression on either Holland or Switzerland: apprehensions of M. Corbin regarding British land contribution and military equipment needs.	42
45	To SIR R. CLIVE Brussels No. 58	Jan. 28	Records observations of Belgian Ambassador who was informed of contents of No. 40: he expressed opinion that Dutch would resist if attacked but conveyed impression that Belgium would wish to keep out unless also attacked.	44
46	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 40	Jan. 28	Reports interview with President Kalinin on presentation of Letters of Credence: President spoke of hope for better understanding between Soviet and British Governments and necessity for good Anglo-Soviet trade relations.	45

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
47 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig No. 31	Jan. 28	Reports conversation with Dr. Böttcher, Head of Foreign Department of Danzig Senate, regarding future of Danzig: in absence of unforeseen circumstances he predicted that situation would remain unchanged throughout present year.	46
48 To SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 5	Jan. 29	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that according to reports received by H.M.G., Herr Hitler was considering an attack on Western Powers in near future and that his plans might involve occupation of Holland.	48
49 SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 2	Jan. 29	Refers to No. 40 and reports that memorandum was handed to M.F.A. in accordance with instructions. Latter proposed to show it to King and would send a reply as soon as possible.	48
50 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 28	Jan. 29	Refers to No. 40 and reports action taken. Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that French Government had received similar information except on two points: according to French Ambassador at Berne, Swiss military authorities thought another crisis like that of September 1938 was in prospect.	48
51 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 29	Jan. 29	Refers to No. 50 and reports gist of M. Daladier's preliminary remarks and impressions: reply to memorandum would be sent on January 30 or 31.	49
52 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 31	Jan. 29	Reports inquiry from M. Daladier as to whether Great Britain would not soon introduce conscription: M. Daladier also expressed fear that armour of British Army was out of date in way of mechanization and motorization, &c.	50
53 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 30	Jan. 29	Reports M. Daladier's view that President Roosevelt should openly side with democracies by proposing immediate repeal of Neutrality Act: he also suggested that President Roosevelt should call an international conference.	50
54 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 32	Jan. 29	Reports conversation with M.F.A. who agreed that if Herr Hitler attacked it would be on a large scale from Holland to Tunis: meanwhile M. Bonnet meant to pretend that Franco-German declaration was in operation until Germany violated it.	51
55 MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 51	Jan. 30	Refers to No. 41 and states that message has been delivered: reports information from reliable visitor to White House that both President and State Department anticipated not so much invasion of Holland as a mobilization on Dutch frontier and demands for surrender of portion of Netherlands East Indies.	51
56 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 16	Jan. 30	Reports information from reliable person recently in Memel that 'Anschluss' expected to take place about March 15.	52

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
57	SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 4	Jan. 30	Refers to No. 48 and reports conversations with M.F.A. and Belgian Minister regarding possible German attack on Holland: M.F.A. estimated period of possible resistance at from three to four days.	52
58	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 36	Jan. 30	Refers to No. 40 and reports that Colonel Petibon, in conversation with Military Attaché, stated that views of H.M.G. conformed in substance to those of French General Staff: Colonel Petibon uncertain of attitude of Belgium and suggested that H.M.G. might sound Belgian Government on subject.	53
59	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 17	Jan. 30	Refers to No. 35 and reports that German Embassy now stated that Herr Schnurre, who was due in Moscow from Warsaw on January 31, had been recalled to Berlin 'for reasons of service'.	54
60	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 41 Saving	Jan. 30	Reports press statement that as result of recent conversations in Berlin between Herr von Ribbentrop and M. Chvalkovsky, the National Socialist Party and its members on Czecho-Slovak soil might exercise their activities unhindered on lines laid down by Herr Bohle, Head of Foreign Organization of National-Socialist Party.	54
61	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 30 Saving	Jan. 30	Refers to No. 60 and transmits text of official communiqué published in Prague and Berlin on January 28 regarding activities of National-Socialist Party in Czecho-Slovakia.	55
62	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 6 Saving	Jan. 30	Reports general impressions of M.F.A. on his visit to Berlin from January 16 to 18: Count Csaky expressed view that for present Germany wanted peace.	55
63	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 44	Jan. 30	Transmits copy of German-Czecho-Slovak Agreement dealing with specific question of military transport over railways, which was signed on January 24: comments thereon.	56
64	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 3	Jan. 31	Refers to No. 49 and reports that no reply yet received from M.F.A.: in conversation with King's Private Secretary latter emphasized determination of Belgium to maintain her independence and referred to German guarantee which was only binding so long as Belgium lent no assistance to any country at war with Germany.	58
65	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 45	Jan. 31	Summarizes and comments on chief points on political issues dealt with in Herr Hitler's speech to Reichstag on January 30: declaration of solidarity with Italy outstanding feature: alluding to Great Britain, Herr Hitler said that interests of Britain and Germany did not conflict.	58

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
66	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 47	Jan. 31	Continuation of No. 65: comments on portions of speech which dealt with Colonies, Jews, Church, United States, and relations with other countries.	59
67	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 48 Saving	Jan. 31	Reports reaction in France to Herr Hitler's speech of January 30: although Signor Mussolini's speech awaited with some anxiety, there was generally a much more hopeful feeling in Paris than for some weeks past.	60
68	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 49	Jan. 31	Refers to No. 6 and expresses opinion that M.F.A. may perhaps have been subject to greater pressure in Berlin than Dr. Masarik was willing to admit: submits reasons for this view.	61
69	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 51	Jan. 31	Transmits record of conversation between Air Attaché and member of General Staff on general European situation: draws attention to Czecho-Slovak official's view that Germany was now making speedy arrangements for a major war and that orders for armaments from Skoda now being considered if not already placed.	64
70	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels	Jan. 31	Letter to Sir O. Sargent stating that he is still waiting for reply to memorandum left with M.F.A. on January 29 (see No. 49): suggests reasons why reply has been held up.	66
71	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 18	Feb. 1	Refers to No. 16 and reports that according to German Ambassador, Dr. Schnurre had been recalled from Warsaw on urgent business but would no doubt visit Moscow later.	67
72	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 4	Feb. 1	Refers to No. 64 and transmits text of reply of Belgian Government to Memorandum handed to them on January 29: Belgian Government to maintain policy of independence.	67
73	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 17	Feb. 1	Refers to No. 74 and reports M. Beck's comments in reply to question whether Danzig had been discussed with Herr von Ribbentrop. Suggests that visit of M. Beck to London might prove useful apart from Danzig question.	68
74	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 16	Feb. 1	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding his conversations in Warsaw with Herr von Ribbentrop: M. Beck stated that Herr von Ribbentrop's visit had practically only reaffirmed what had passed during his visit to Berchtesgaden and Munich. M.F.A. spoke of his desire for more satisfactory relations with France.	68
75	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 5	Feb. 1	Refers to No. 72 and reports M.F.A.'s observations regarding Belgian Government's policy of independence: Belgian Government convinced that only chance	69

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		to maintain their independence and avoid invasion was to have no commitments at all with any country.	
76 SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	Feb. 1	Minute recording conversation with French Ambassador regarding anti-Comintern Pact and reports of German-Soviet discussions.	70
77 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 146	Feb. 1	Transmits reply from French Government to <i>aide-mémoire</i> presented to M.F.A. on January 29 embodying impressions formed by H.M.G. regarding possible German plans and views as to action to be taken in event of plans materializing.	71
78 To SIR N. BLAND The Hague Tel. No. 8	Feb. 2	Refers to No. 30 and states that Secretary of State will be very glad to see M. Patijn when he comes to London and suggests a meeting on February 14.	73
79 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 151	Feb. 2	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché dated February 1 reporting his conversation with Deuxième Bureau of French Air Force regarding Germany's aims in Europe.	74
80 SIR R. CLIVE Brussels No. 68	Feb. 2	Refers to Nos. 72 and 75 and transmits copy of reply of Belgian Government to Note addressed to them regarding position of Belgium in event of a German invasion of Holland: transmits also record of conversation which Military Attaché had with Minister of National Defence and Chief of General Staff on same subject: General Denis and General Van den Bergen anxious for exchange of information with British and French Staffs.	75
81 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 25	Feb. 3	Transmits views of H.M.G. regarding future conduct of conversations between British and French General Staffs: instructions to inform French Government accordingly and to ask whether they would be prepared to issue similar instructions to their General Staff.	79
82 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 10	Feb. 3	Refers to No. 73 and reports information given to American colleague by Herr Bassler of German Foreign Office that any question of change in status of Danzig was to be excluded from topics for discussion by Herr von Ribbentrop at Warsaw: colonial question likely to receive early consideration by German Government.	80
83 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 7 Saving	Feb. 6	Reports information from Vice-M.F.A. regarding situation in Carpatho-Ukraine: in reply to question M. Arciszewski said that Poland still hoped to secure common frontier with Hungary.	80
84 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 8 Saving	Feb. 6	Reports conversation with Vice-M.F.A. regarding position between Germany and Poland concerning Danzig and question of communications across Corridor between Reich and Danzig.	81

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
85	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 9 Saving	Feb. 6	Reports information from Vice-M.F.A. that Commercial Agreement with Soviet Union likely to be concluded within a week: commercial negotiations with Germany, which were to begin about middle of February, were of minor importance.	82
86	To MR. MACK Paris	Feb. 6	Letter from Mr. Strang regarding French attitude to joint guarantee by four Munich Powers of Czecho-Slovakia: asks Mr. Mack to clear up certain point and confirm that French view was as stated in their Note of January 18.	82
87	To MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 64	Feb. 7	Refers to No. 41 and transmits, for information of President, conclusions reached after further consideration regarding question of possible German attack on Netherlands and Switzerland.	83
88	To MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 65	Feb. 7	Refers to No. 87 and transmits summary of replies received from French and Belgian Governments and some indication of views of Netherlands Government for transmission to President.	84
89	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 26	Feb. 8	Reports information received from Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding progress in execution of German-Czecho-Slovak Option Agreement.	85
90	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 58	Feb. 8	Refers to No. 42 and reports that French Ambassador has concurred in terms of proposed communication to German Government regarding guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia: Note being sent to German Government on February 8 and French Ambassador taking similar action.	86
91	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 174	Feb. 8	Refers to No. 90 and transmits copy of communication to German Government.	86
92	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 27	Feb. 8	Reports that superficial improvement in Polish-German relations resulting from M.F.A.'s visit to Berchtesgaden and Herr von Ribbentrop's to Warsaw, has not been reflected in any lessening of national minority grievances on either side: question source of discord which could be magnified into live issue at any time.	87
93	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 85	Feb. 9	Reports information from Belgian colleague regarding conversation which he had with German Ambassador regarding international situation and Italian claims.	89
94	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 325	Feb. 9	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on February 6 regarding Franco-British co-operation in event of German attack in West.	90
95	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 186	Feb. 9	Transmits copy of note of February 8 from French Embassy to German Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.	91

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
96	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 64	Feb. 9	Transmits copy of despatch from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, reporting an interview with Slovak Prime Minister. Dr. Tiso expressed himself as content with new boundaries of Slovakia and spoke of German and Hungarian minorities between which he drew a distinction.	92
97	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 65	Feb. 9	Transmits copy of despatch from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, enclosing memorandum on present political situation in Slovakia.	93

CHAPTER II

Further correspondence on the European situation and estimates of German intentions: German-Polish relations: the international guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia (February 10–March 9, 1939)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
98	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 51 Saving	Feb. 10	Refers to No. 77 and sets forth terms of reply to be sent to French Note of January 31: contains assurance that H.M.G. would regard any German attack on Holland or Switzerland as a <i>casus belli</i> .	100
99	TO SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 1 Saving	Feb. 10	Instructions to make a communication to Belgian Government in terms of No. 98.	102
100	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade No. 17	Feb. 10	Transmits Note by Military Attaché recording a conversation which he had with Yugoslav Chief of General Staff on February 7 concerning European situation: Yugoslav sympathies strongly directed towards Britain and France.	102
101	TO SIR R. CLIVE Brussels	Feb. 11	Letter from Sir A. Cadogan acknowledging No. 80 and agreeing that it would be inopportune to say anything more to Belgian Government at present: inquires views as to pursuing matter with Belgian Chief of Staff.	104
102	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 9	Feb. 13	Refers to No. 99 and states that, in view of Cabinet crisis, action on No. 99 is being deferred, subject to Foreign Office concurrence.	106
103	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 122	Feb. 14	Records conversation of Soviet Ambassador with Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, during which M. Maisky outlined his view of course of Anglo-Soviet relations during six years of his tenure of office and gave his opinion regarding international situation: Mr. Butler gained impression that Soviet Government would now pursue an isolationist policy.	106

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
104	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 207	Feb. 14	Reports that Memorandum in sense of No. 98 was handed to M.F.A. on February 13: M. Bonnet promised early reply to memorandum of February 3 regarding Staff conversations.	108
105	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 31	Feb. 15	Reports difference of opinion between German and Czecho-Slovak Governments on interpretation of clause in Article 3 of Optants Agreement in so far as it applies to Sudeten Jews: matter to be referred to mixed commission.	108
106	TO SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 10	Feb. 15	Refers to No. 102: instructions to make communication to Political Director without waiting for solution of Cabinet crisis and appointment of new M.F.A.	109
107	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 11 Saving TO MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 19	Feb. 15	Requests information on two points regarding Optants Agreement; (1) indication of number of persons on either side who have already opted and (2) assurance that all those entitled to opt are being afforded opportunities of so doing.	109
108	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 85	Feb. 15	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador, who called to say that M. Beck was pleased to learn that it might be possible to arrange a visit for him to London, apart from a meeting of Council of Three: date as yet undecided.	110
109	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 61	Feb. 16	Reports interview with M.F.A. on February 15, when subjects of Anglo-German relations, Germany's desire for peace, anti-German attitude of U.S.A., Dr. Ley's visit to London, possible visit to Germany of President of Board of Trade, visit to England of Dr. Funk in future, visit to Germany of representative of British Air Force and reasons why Prime Minister did not hold an election after Munich, discussed.	110
110	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 11 Saving	Feb. 16	Reports that some twenty arrests among German minority in Corridor have recently been made on charges ranging from spying to expression of anti-Polish views.	111
111	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	Feb. 16	Letter from Mr. Strang regarding conversation with Polish Ambassador who was anxious that M. Beck should come to London and wished to discuss how best such a visit could be arranged. Records information from Ambassador regarding German-Polish relations.	112
112	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 35	Feb. 17	Refers to No. 107 and transmits information requested regarding working of Optants Agreement.	113
113	TO MR. MALLET Washington Tel. No. 81	Feb. 17	Records latest arrangements agreed upon with French Government regarding attitude to be adopted in event of attack by Germany, for communication to President.	114

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
114	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 21	Feb. 17	Reports further rumours regarding impending commercial negotiations between German and Soviet Governments and that Herr Schnurre is due to arrive on March 8.	115
115	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 41	Feb. 17	Instructions to note views contained in enclosures to Mr. Strang's letter of February 13 before speaking to Field-Marshal Göring about possible visit of representative of R.A.F. to Berlin.	115
116	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 41 Saving	Feb. 17	Refers to No. 112 and quotes text of relevant passage in circular issued by Minister of Interior on December 21, which requires an optant to show proof that he is not of German birth.	116
117	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 223	Feb. 17	Transmits report by Air Attaché on present condition of German Air Force.	116
118	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 64	Feb. 18	Reports conversation with Field-Marshal Göring who expressed uneasiness over Great Britain's rearmament policy: Sir N. Henderson considers that Herr Hitler does not contemplate any adventures at moment and that all rumours to contrary are completely without real foundation: suggests that it would be useful publicly in press and speeches to stress full reliance on Herr Hitler's peaceful intentions.	120
119	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 225	Feb. 18	Reports conversation with State Secretary who stated that Herr von Ribbentrop had now collected all threads of foreign policy into his own hands and conveyed warning that it was essential that everything should be done direct through him. Baron von Weizsäcker expressed view that there would be no question likely to arise this year which might lead to risk of war.	122
120	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 65	Feb. 19	Reports Field-Marshal Göring's comments on invitation extended through German Air Attaché in London to Chief of Air Staff to visit Berlin.	123
121	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 24	Feb. 19	Reports conversation with M. Litvinov regarding international situation: latter stated that Soviet Government saw no signs whatever that France and Great Britain would do anything but capitulate and that therefore Soviet Union would keep aloof.	123
122	SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 76	Feb. 20	Refers to No. 113 and reports interview with Under-Secretary of State who was very perturbed at disquieting reports he had received of European situation: he expected that crisis would come in middle of March and that by end of month war was more likely than peace.	124
123	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 42 Saving	Feb. 20	Reports resignation of General Krejci, Chief of General Staff.	125

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
124	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 84	Feb. 20	Reports that German minority questions have been a good deal to the fore recently and comments on activities of Herr Kundt, leader of German 'Volksgruppe', with whom Czecho-Slovak Government anxious to come to terms: first meeting between representatives of Government and of German minority took place on February 16.	126
125	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 67	Feb. 20	Reports M. Litvinov's remarks regarding Government control of Soviet press and mentions incident regarding review in 'Krasnaya Zvezda' of Russian reference book entitled 'The Armed Forces of the British Empire'.	128
126	MR. TROUTBECK Prague	Feb. 20	Letter to Mr. Strang describing conversation with M.F.A. who spoke with moderate optimism about internal and external situation: M. Chvalkovsky mentioned his idea of a declaration of neutrality by Czecho-Slovakia and asked how H.M.G. would favour it: Germany, he believed, would welcome it. Reports further conversation with M. Masarik and French Minister on subject of Czecho-Slovak neutrality.	129
127	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 74 Saving	Feb. 21	Summarizes press comments on projected visit of Mr. Stanley and Mr. Hudson to Berlin in connexion with Anglo-German trade talks beginning in March.	131
128	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow	Feb. 21	Letter to Sir L. Oliphant regarding Mr. Hudson's proposed visit to Moscow, and subjects to be discussed.	132
129	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 63	Feb. 22	Refers to No. 81 and expresses hope that reply will soon be received from French Government: instructions as to action to be taken on immediately following telegram, which contains statement of procedure contemplated for forthcoming conversations between the two Staffs.	133
130	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 68	Feb. 22	Reports information from Dr. Wichl, Chief of Economic Section of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regarding German-Soviet commercial relations.	134
131	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 69	Feb. 22	Refers to No. 130 and reports comments of Dr. Wichl on Mr. Hudson's proposed visit to Moscow.	134
132	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 67	Feb. 22	Refers to No. 107 and reports information from Dr. Koukal, Czecho-Slovak signatory of Optants Agreement, regarding working of Agreement.	135
133	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 64	Feb. 22	Refers to No. 129 and transmits statement in question: instructions to inform French Government accordingly and ask for names of their representatives and date on which they would propose to arrive.	135

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
134 MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 41	Feb. 22	Reports that he has received copy of <i>aide-mémoire</i> said to have been submitted on February 22 to British, German, French, and Italian Governments by Czecho-Slovak Representatives in those countries declaring Czecho-Slovak Government's readiness to make a declaration of neutrality.	136
135 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 70	Feb. 22	Reports conversation with Netherlands Minister when remarks made to latter by Field-Marshal Göring regarding American and British press and their alleged incitement of Western Powers to war against Germany were discussed.	137
136 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 95 Saving	Feb. 22	Refers to No. 129 and reports that reply from French Government regarding Staff conversations has not yet been received: Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, however, assured Counsellor that answer was favourable and explained reasons for delay in communicating it.	137
137 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 354	Feb. 22	Records conversation with German Ambassador when questions affecting general international situation discussed, i.e. Anglo-German relations, attitude of President Roosevelt, Italian press attacks on France, and question of visit to England of Herr von Ribbentrop.	138
138 SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	Feb. 22	Note on <i>aide-mémoire</i> left by Czecho-Slovak Chargé d'Affaires regarding proposed Declaration of Neutrality.	141
139 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	Feb. 22	Letter to Sir O. Sargent describing change which has taken place in Polish official opinion in favour of France and Great Britain: on other hand several minor manifestations of normal Polish dislike of Germany have been apparent.	142
140 GERMAN AMBASSADOR London	Feb. 23	Letter to Prime Minister informing him of position regarding right of option of inhabitants of Sudeten-German territories transferred to Germany: considers that any anxiety with regard to fate of German socialists remaining in Sudeten-German territories is unfounded.	143
141 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 20	Feb. 24	Instructions regarding points to be put to M. Beck in connexion with his proposed visit to London: question of subjects to be discussed, &c.	144
142 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 31	Feb. 24	Reports that offence has been caused by expulsion of Polish students from Danzig Polytechnic by uniformed Nazi students who have also exasperated Polish public opinion by displaying derogatory notice at students' meeting: large student demonstrations occurred in Warsaw on February 24 but were prevented from reaching German Embassy by police.	145

NO. AND DATE	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
143 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 76	Feb. 24	Refers to No. 136 and summarizes French Government's reply regarding Staff conversations.	145
144 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 15 Saving	Feb. 24	Reports conversation with German Ambassador who was curious regarding M. Beck's visit to London. Herr von Moltke gave his views regarding Danzig and probable extent of German demands: position of Dr. Burckhardt also discussed and Ambassador expressed his opinion that it would be unwise to withdraw him.	146
145 MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 98	Feb. 24	Transmits memorandum by Air Attaché reporting conversation with General Krejci prior to latter's retirement: views of General Krejci on political situation in Europe.	147
146 MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 45	Feb. 25	Expresses hope that when attitude of Czecho-Slovak Government is discussed in debate on loan to Czecho-Slovakia, the sacrifices they have already made for peace will be borne in mind: discusses Czecho-Slovak point of view on question of optants which seems to be worthy of respect.	149
147 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 16	Feb. 25	Refers to No. 142 and reports result of inquiry into alleged expulsion of Polish students from Danzig Polytechnic: Danzigers indignant at resolution passed by Polish students on February 22 regarding control of mouth of Vistula.	151
148 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 32	Feb. 25	Refers to No. 141 and reports that M. Beck is ready to come to London in last week of March or first week in April: he would prefer not to attend meeting of Committee of Three but would send representative. General situation and Jewish question are subjects which he would like to discuss.	151
149 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 65 Saving	Feb. 25	Refers to No. 133: instructions to make certain alterations in communication to French Government.	152
150 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 17 Saving	Feb. 25	Refers to No. 142 and reports that M. Beck does not seem to attach undue importance to student demonstrations in Danzig, Poznan, and Warsaw, which he ascribed to Opposition and foreign elements anxious to embarrass Polish Government on eve of Count Ciano's visit.	152
151 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 43	Feb. 25	Reports information from German Ambassador regarding Polish-German conversations to be held concerning minorities. In spite of numerous reports of incidents and arrests among Germany minority, German Government continue attempts to obtain goodwill in Poland.	152

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
152	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 256	Feb. 25	Transmits reply of Ministry of Foreign Affairs to <i>aide-mémoire</i> left with them on February 3 regarding Anglo-French Staff conversations.	154
153	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 258	Feb. 25	Refers to No. 129 and reports that memorandum embodying statement of procedure regarding Staff conversations was handed to Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 25: early reply was promised.	156
154	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 17	Feb. 26	Refers to No. 147 and reports that Polish students were in fact ordered by Nazi students to leave lecture hall, which they did.	156
155	MR. PARES Bratislava	Feb. 26	Letter to Mr. Troutbeck, Prague, informing him of reports regarding deterioration of financial position of Government, activities of Hlinka Guard, and increase of German influence in Slovakia.	157
156	MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 46	Feb. 27	Refers to No. 146 and reports that Czecho-Slovak Government have proposed to German Government that time limit for opting shall be extended to end of June: Czecho-Slovak National Council has issued manifesto to Czecho-Slovak inhabitants of Sudeten territories warning them against opting <i>en masse</i> .	158
157	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 18	Feb. 27	Refers to Nos. 147 and 154 and reports further disturbances in neighbourhood of Polytechnic when Polish students were again ejected and assaulted by Danzig students and subsequently by Police.	159
158	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 95	Feb. 27	Summarizes present information of H.M.G. regarding various subjects dealt with in No. 122, for transmission to State Department.	159
159	MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 105	Feb. 27	Summarizes communiqué issued by Czecho-Slovak Press Bureau and published in press of February 26 stating that further improvement has occurred in situation in Czecho-Slovak frontier area.	162
160	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 72	Feb. 28	Transmits views of Military Attaché regarding German mobilization rumours.	162
161	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 36	Feb. 28	Refers to Nos. 157 and 150 and reports that although student disturbances in Polish towns seem to have been fomented by elements hostile to M.F.A. and anxious to embarrass Government on eve of Count Ciano's visit, position of M. Beck or of Government does not seem in any way threatened. Official communiqué announced that Government had demanded suspension of lectures at Danzig Polytechnic.	163

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
162	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 258	Feb. 28	Reviews situation prior to Herr Hitler's speech on January 30 and suggests reason for its comparatively moderate tone: discusses forthcoming Anglo-German economic negotiations and expresses view that on political side intentions of Germany appear to be governed principally by state of Franco-Italian relations: considers that period of relative calm in immediate future is likely.	163
163	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 74	Mar. 2	Reports conversation with Herr Hitler on occasion of dinner given by him to Diplomatic Corps. Chancellor stated that only question which separated Germany and Great Britain was colonial one.	165
164	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 72	Mar. 2	Sets forth reasons why it is considered desirable that High Commissioner should return to Danzig and hopes French Government will agree that M. Burckhardt should now resume his post. French Government should be informed that Secretary of State contemplates calling meeting of Committee of Three during last fortnight of April, but proposes to have preliminary discussions with M. Beck during his visit to London.	166
165	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 84	Mar. 2	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding reports received by him from French Ambassador in Berlin concerning Franco-German relations and rumours in French and British press regarding likelihood of German attack on Holland or Switzerland.	167
166	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 78	Mar. 2	Refers to No. 161 and reports reaction in official German circles to student demonstrations in Warsaw and Danzig: only comment in press was in 'Deutsche Diplomatische Politische Korrespondenz'.	168
167	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 80	Mar. 3	Refers to No. 91 and summarizes reply of German Government regarding proposed four-Power guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.	169
168	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 87	Mar. 3	Refers to No. 164 and transmits views of French Government regarding advisability of return of High Commissioner to Danzig: they would prefer to know Swedish reaction to proposal before coming to a decision.	169
169	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 155	Mar. 3	Reports information given to Military Attaché by his German colleague who has just returned from Berlin: Herr von Ribbentrop had told him that dangerous time was over and as soon as armistice was arranged in Spain, Germany would reopen negotiations with French and keep Italians quiet.	170

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
170	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 509	Mar. 3	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on March 2 regarding Staff conversations: Sir A. Cadogan explained views of H.M.G. regarding preliminary work before actual meetings took place.	170
171	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 269	Mar. 3	Refers to No. 167 and transmits copy of Note received from Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated February 28 giving their views with regard to a guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.	171
172	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 275	Mar. 3	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché recording his views on possible effects from purely military point of view of any concessions made by Great Britain to Germany at present in economic field. Discusses issues involved which raise important questions of policy which outweigh purely military considerations.	173
173	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 45	Mar. 3	Reports that Italian M.F.A. arrived in Warsaw on February 24 and left on March 1: visit outwardly marked by extreme cordiality on both sides: transmits views regarding subjects likely to have been discussed and in general considers that upshot of Count Ciano's visit has been to strengthen bonds of genuine friendship between Italy and Poland without leading to any political commitments.	177
174	MR. HOLMAN Berlin	Mar. 3	Letter to Mr. Strang discussing question of German-Czech relations and international guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.	180
175	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 39	Mar. 4	Reports dates suggested by M. Beck for his visit to London which he would like to be regarded as semi-official: outlines subjects for discussion.	181
176	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 21 Saving	Mar. 5	Refers to No. 161 and reports information from M.F.A. that excitement regarding recent incidents in Danzig had largely died down: Polytechnic would shortly be reopened and some understanding to avoid future incidents would no doubt be found.	181
177	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 22 Saving	Mar. 5	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding visit of Italian M.F.A. to Warsaw: M. Beck stated that while there could not be said to be any concrete results, he was satisfied as to reasonable attitude of Italian Government, especially as regards France.	182
178	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 40	Mar. 6	Reports conversation with Roumanian M.F.A. who had made an excellent impression in Warsaw: M. Gafencu stated that he was more than satisfied with results of his visit as it had shown that Polish and Roumanian views on majority of questions of common interest were now identical.	182

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
179	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 45 Saving	Mar. 6	Reports announcement in Press that a supplementary Agreement to Czecho-Slovak-German Option Agreement was signed on March 4 prolonging option period until June 30.	183
180	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 46 Saving	Mar. 6	Reports that relations between Czechs and Slovaks seem to be heading for a crisis owing to Slovak demand for financial assistance and, it is believed, an undue measure of independence in army matters: summarizes communiqué issued regarding visit of Slovak Ministers, MM. Sidor and Teplansky, to Prague and leading article in 'Venkov' of March 5 in this connexion: discusses role played by Germany in dispute.	183
181	COL. MASON- MACFARLANE Berlin	Mar. 6	Minute recording observations of Polish Military Attaché regarding Germany's ambitions and means of keeping them in check: Polish authorities, he stated, had no evidence of any reduction in speed or scope of Germany's rearmament programme.	184
182	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig No. 57	Mar. 6	Submits observations on question as to whether High Commissioner should return to Danzig: considers that his presence can no longer safeguard either the Constitution, the Minorities, or the status of the Free City itself.	186
183	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 81	Mar. 6	Transmits memoranda compiled by various members of staff of H.M. Embassy covering political, economic, and military aspects of problem of possible effect of war upon U.S.S.R.: expresses general concurrence with views put forward and adds comments based on comparison of life in Russia before revolution and present-day conditions.	188
184	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 93 Saving	Mar. 7	Transmits text of statement by 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' of March 6 announcing signature of Supplementary Agreement to German-Czecho-Slovak Treaty on Nationality and Options questions of November 20.	200
185	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 47 Saving	Mar. 7	Reports communiqué published in press stating that Slovak Government regard the political and constitutional position of Slovakia as settled by Constitutional Law on Slovak Autonomy: impression in Prague is that communiqué implies virtual capitulation of Slovaks.	200
186	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 24 Saving	Mar. 7	Reports conversation with Vice-M.F.A. regarding Slovak movement for independence: M. Arciszewski stated he was to receive a member of Slovak Government on March 7 and detailed list of questions	201

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		he expected to be asked and replies which he proposed to return thereto: reports remarks of M. Arciszewski regarding his conversation with Herr Himmler about German activities in Ruthenia, and about his disappointment with result of visit of Count Ciano.	
187 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	Mar. 7	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan summarizing Polish attitude towards visit of German, Italian, and Roumanian M.F.As: reports that recent better feeling regarding France may be adversely affected owing to rumour that French had something to do with recent student demonstrations: discusses activities of M. Beck.	202
188 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 51	Mar. 8	Reports that M.F.A. has been informed verbally of nature of German reply to H.M.G. regarding guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia. M. Chvalkovsky stated that German condition that all other neighbouring States must be prepared to assume a similar obligation was new to him and he detailed list of conditions laid down by German Government during his visit to Berlin in January: in reply to inquiry, M.F.A. gave assurance that relations of Czecho-Slovakia with Hungary and Poland continued to improve and that frontier had now been virtually agreed.	204
189 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 23	Mar. 8	Refers to No. 175 and states that dates suggested for visit by M. Beck are convenient: instructions to inform M. Beck that as there is no colonial question between Poland and United Kingdom, there is nothing to discuss in that connexion.	204
190 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 25 Saving	Mar. 8	Refers to No. 177 and reports observations of French Ambassador regarding Polish commitments under French alliance with Poland.	205
191 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 55	Mar. 8	Refers to No. 151 and reports that Polish-German conversations in Berlin regarding complaints of ill-treatment of minorities have already been suspended and no date is foreseen for their renewal: meanwhile Polish public opinion has again been unfavourably impressed by arrival of more Polish Jews from Germany.	205
192 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 170	Mar. 9	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding his visit to Warsaw. Count Ciano said that Italians and Poles were on good terms; as regards question of a joint Hungarian-Polish frontier, he had told M. Beck that he considered question had been settled by Vienna Award and that Italy would do nothing further in the matter.	206

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
193	MR. HUDSON Department of Overseas Trade	Mar. 9	Transmits record of conversation with M. Maisky on March 9 regarding his forthcoming visit to Moscow and Anglo-Russian trade.	206
194	MR. R. A. BUTLER Foreign Office	Mar. 9	Minute recording conversation with Soviet Ambassador who expressed his distrust and anxiety regarding British motives in approaches to U.S.S.R. at present time.	208

CHAPTER III

The German violation of the Munich Agreement and the destruction of Czech independence (March 9-17, 1939)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
195	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 315	Mar. 9	Discusses situation of Germany, Herr Hitler's aims and ambitions for future, and policy to be adopted by H.M.G.	210
196	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 43	Mar. 10	Reports observations of M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet regarding Secretary of State's refusal to regard 'colonial question' as a subject for discussion during M. Beck's visit: suggests terms of communication which might be made to M. Beck regarding subjects to be discussed.	217
197	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 84	Mar. 10	Reports that both Vice-Consul at Dresden and Military Attaché have received information that Slovak claims against Czechs will be encouraged to point of civil disturbance whereupon Germany will send troops to restore order: discusses possibility of Herr Hitler contemplating some <i>coup</i> in Czecho-Slovakia.	218
198	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 53	Mar. 10	Reports dismissal from office by President of Republic of certain members of Slovak Government including Dr. Tiso: summarizes statement broadcast explaining reasons for this measure.	219
199	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 54	Mar. 10	Reports information from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, that town was reasonably quiet though there had been demonstrations on morning of March 10 by unarmed members of Hlinka Guard proclaiming their loyalty to MM. Sidor, Tiso, and Mach: situation seemed under control.	220
200	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 55	Mar. 10	Refers to No. 198 and transmits account of Slovak crisis as received from M.F.A.	220
201	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 306	Mar. 10	Transmits copy of memorandum of March 10 from Military Attaché recording a conversation with General Dentz regarding German pressure on Czecho-Slovakia.	221
202	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 86	Mar. 11	Summarizes press comments on controversy between Czechs and Slovaks.	222

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
203	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 85	Mar. 11	Reports press announcement that Slovak Government of Dr. Tiso has appealed to German Government: discusses situation and suggests that nothing should be said or published abroad during weekend which might excite Herr Hitler to precipitate action.	223
204	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 94	Mar. 11	Refers to No. 153 and reports that French Government are in agreement with proposals of H.M.G. and suggest that conversations begin in London about March 15: transmits list of French Staff officers who will attend meetings.	223
205	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 96	Mar. 11	Refers to No. 168 and reports that French Government, in view of Swedish concurrence, agree to return of High Commissioner to Danzig.	224
206	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 57	Mar. 11	Reports that in official circles it is stated that, contrary to allegations on German wireless of March 10, calm reigns throughout country.	224
207	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 44	Mar. 11	Refers to No. 186 and reports that Polish attitude to events in Czecho-Slovakia seems to be one of rather anxious passivity: transmits observations of an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Polish idea of a satisfactory solution for Slovakia and Ruthenia.	224
208	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 58	Mar. 11	Transmits substance of Slovak broadcast from Vienna by Dr. Durcansky, one of deposed Slovak Ministers, in which he urged Slovak population and Hlinka Guards to put up resistance against Czechs, stating that Slovakia would fight for her rights and could reckon on support of her friend Germany.	225
209	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 59	Mar. 11	Reports press announcement that owing to absence of M. Sivak in Rome, M. Teplansky had taken temporary charge of Slovak Government: at 12.30 p.m. M. Teplansky broadcast appeal for order and at midnight M. Sidor stated on wireless that political situation would be cleared up and new Government constitutionally appointed within next few hours.	225
210	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 61	Mar. 11	Reports that situation in Bratislava, thanks to military reinforcements, appears to be in hand for time being: demonstrations have taken place and German Party showed their sympathy with Slovak extremists: MM. Tuka and Mach both under arrest in Bohemia and M. Murgas reported to have fled abroad.	226
211	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 62	Mar. 11	Refers to No. 210 and states that H.M. Consul at Bratislava reports that conditions now seem almost normal. owing to	226

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		M. Sidor's open support of new Government H.M. Consul thinks it may indicate that it has greater chances of popularity.	
212 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 51 Saving	Mar. 11	Recapitulates certain items which appear to justify present uneasiness regarding internal situation: no conclusive evidence however of German intention to disrupt State and view held in certain quarters, including French Legation, is that policy of Reich does not yet extend beyond keeping Czecho-Slovakia weak.	226
213 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 308	Mar. 11	Transmits reply of March 10 received from Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Anglo-French Staff conversations.	228
214 MR. CARVELL Munich Tel. No. 7 to Berlin " " 5 to F.O.	Mar. 12	Reports that state of emergency has been declared for Munich garrison and that there have been troop movements during weekend in direction of Austria.	229
215 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 63	Mar. 12	Reports telephone message from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, who states that situation appears outwardly calm but it is impossible to say what is happening below surface: new Government's position uncertain as there appear to be two groups in Hlinka Guard, one supporting M. Sidor and the other against him.	229
216 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 64	Mar. 12	Reports composition of new Slovak Government: M. Sidor appointed Premier, M. Teplansky not included.	229
217 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 87	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 203 and reports that up to present there is no evidence that German Government intend to exploit present unrest in Czech-Slovakia: considers that Herr Hitler is waiting to see how things develop.	230
218 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 88	Mar. 13	Reports that whole of press of March 13 devotes sensational headlines to deterioration of situation in Czecho-Slovakia and terrorization policy of Czech authorities: suggests that German Government are endeavouring to prepare public for any action which they may see fit to take against Czecho-Slovakia.	230
219 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 89	Mar. 13	Summarizes press comments on what is described as the Prague 'reign of terror'. 'Völkischer Beobachter' gives prominence to report from Warsaw stating that Colonel Beck, speaking in Warsaw on March 1, said that national sentiments of Slovak people had grown so strong that they should play an active rather than a passive part in politics.	231
220 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 91	Mar. 13	Reports that there are indications that German Government are contemplating some form of intervention in Czecho-Slovakia either by force or by ultimatum	232

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		under armed menace: records advice given to Czecho-Slovak Minister by himself and French Ambassador.	
221 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 92	Mar. 13	Reports that it is announced that Dr. Tiso has received an official invitation from Herr Hitler to visit Berlin and that he has arrived. Herr Hitler leaves on March 14 for Vienna to attend parade of troops commemorating entry into Vienna of last year.	233
222 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 66	Mar. 13	Reports that Slovak authorities have closed bridge-head at Bratislava to stop importation of German arms: transmits views of H.M. Consul, Bratislava, regarding dangerous position of new Government: general expectancy of serious trouble in 48 hours.	233
223 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 90	Mar. 13	Repeats telegram from H.M. Consul, Dresden, stating that his French colleague was informed by reliable eye witness on March 12 that he had been held up for nearly three hours near Breslau by columns of armoured cars going East.	233
224 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 65	Mar. 13	Transmits report received by telephone from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, regarding M. Sidor's demands, German minority press reports, and new Government's relations with German minority.	234
225 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 93	Mar. 13	Repeats Vienna telegram No. 6 of March 13 transmitting substance of reports of military activities in Vienna district: Austrian press and wireless strongly supporting separatist movement of Hlinka guards with reference to self-determination: agitation in Slovakia being fostered by party in Vienna but motives for doing so not clear.	234
226 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 67	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 218 and reports that there are ominous signs in Prague extending beyond Slovakia: clashes between Czech and German population reported to have taken place in several towns and Czech population warned on wireless to avoid being provoked.	235
227 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 103	Mar. 13	Reports information given to Military Attaché by French General Staff regarding abnormal military activity in Germany: measures reminiscent of those which preceded 'Anschluss' and General Staff believe they are connected with situation in Slovakia.	236
228 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 76 Saving	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 204 and states that time has now come for further communications regarding Staff conversations to be exchanged through Service channels: transmits details concerning conversations to be submitted to General Gamelin by Military Attaché.	236

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
229	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 99 Saving	Mar. 13	Reports comments of 'Völkischer Beobachter' on a despatch from its London correspondent in which an article by the Parliamentary correspondent of 'The Times' is quoted as an example of general view expressed in British press that international situation is showing signs of general improvement.	237
230	FOREIGN OFFICE	Mar. 13	Memorandum on position of H.M.G. in connexion with possible developments of Slovak crisis.	238
231	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 69	Mar. 14	Reports that according to official communiqué, President of Republic decided to call a meeting of Slovak Diet at Bratislava on March 14: transmits details of announcement broadcast by Czecho-Slovak wireless regarding visit of Dr. Tiso and Dr. Durcansky to Berlin and meeting of Slovak Diet.	241
232	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 94	Mar. 14	Reports information from well-informed source that Herr Hitler has decided to take action with view to separation of Slovakia from Bohemia and possibly to insist on Customs Union with Germany: suggests course which action may take; possibility of occupation of Prague cannot be excluded.	242
233	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 71	Mar. 14	Reports conversation with Dr. Krno, chief permanent official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regarding attitude of German Government, situation in Slovakia and possibility of changes in Prague Government.	242
234	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 104	Mar. 14	Reports views of French Ministers regarding Slovak crisis.	243
235	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 95	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 232 and reports attitude of German Government regarding Slovak crisis as explained by State Secretary. Considers that no definite line of action has been decided upon but that use of force is certainly not excluded should Prague Government prove recalcitrant.	244
236	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 96	Mar. 14	Reports that Assistant Military Attaché states that rumours of German troop movements towards Czecho-Slovak frontiers continue to circulate.	244
237	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 46	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 207 and reports that according to M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet, M. Bonnet has asked Polish Ambassador in Paris for an appreciation of Poland's attitude to Slovak crisis. Sir H. Kennard asks that he may be informed of attitude of H.M.G.: suggests that, should there be question of a reassembly of Munich Powers, Poland be invited to participate. Comments on attitude of Poland towards present situation.	245

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
238	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 97	Mar. 14	Reports information from Czecho-Slovak Minister that Slovak Diet has voted for complete independence: M. Mastny spoke of possible visit of M. Chvalkovsky to Berlin.	245
239	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 75	Mar. 14	Reports information from H.M. Consul, Bratislava that declaration of Slovak independence carried unanimously by Slovak Diet: new Government composed of four members of Tiso Government, three of Sidor Government and three new members.	246
240	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 72	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 233 and reports further observations of M. Krno regarding obscurity of German policy, German troop movements and rumour of some form of personal union between Governments of Slovakia and Ruthenia.	247
241	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 74	Mar. 14	Reports information from Ministry of Foreign Affairs that President of Republic and M.F.A. leaving for Berlin at 4 p.m.	247
242	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 29	Mar. 14	Reports view of Head of Hungarian Military Intelligence that result of crisis would be formation of an independent Slovakia under German control: if this came about Hungary would at once march into Ruthenia: latter statement confirmed later by M. Eckhardt.	247
243	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 30	Mar. 14	Reports that ultimatum expiring in twelve hours handed by Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czecho-Slovak Minister at 3 p.m.: summarizes main points.	248
244	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 31	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 243 and reports that Czecho-Slovak colleague anticipates that Hungarians will cross Ruthene frontier at several points night of March 14 and will then send M. Brody to set up an autonomous Government which would proclaim union with Hungary.	248
245	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 76	Mar. 14	Reports information regarding reports of German troop concentrations around Bohemian frontier: widespread apprehension in unofficial quarters that a German occupation may be imminent, but Prague retains its habitual calm.	249
246	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 100	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 241 and suggests likely demands which Herr Hitler will make on Czecho-Slovak Ministers.	249
247	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 49	Mar. 14	Instructions to convey message to German Government expressing concern of H.M.G. lest any action should be taken by Germany in Central Europe which would cause a setback to efforts being made to restore confidence and a relaxation of tension in Europe.	250

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248	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 98	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 235 and reports observations made to State Secretary regarding manner in which German Government handled present situation to which, in view of Munich settlement, H.M.G. could not remain indifferent.	250
249	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 99	Mar. 14	Summarizes leading articles in 'Völkischer Beobachter' regarding alleged ill-treatment of German minority in Czecho-Slovakia.	251
250	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 47	Mar. 14	Reports information given to Counsellor by M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet regarding Polish attitude to Slovak crisis.	252
251	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 29	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 237 and states that as situation changes from hour to hour, it is difficult to give statement of attitude of H.M.G. Refers to No. 247 for latest action taken.	253
252	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 32	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 244 and reports explanation of Secretary-General regarding action taken by Hungary against Czecho-Slovakia.	253
253	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 17 Saving	Mar. 14	Refers to No. 243 and transmits text of Note handed to Czecho-Slovak Minister at Budapest at 3 p.m. on March 14 outlining Hungary's demands.	254
254	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 79	Mar. 15	Reports information from M.F.A. that German military forces started occupation of Bohemia at 6 a.m. on March 15. President of Republic on way back from Berlin.	255
255	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 101	Mar. 15	Suggests advisability of postponing visit of President of Board of Trade to Germany in view of entry into Czecho-Slovakia of German troops.	255
256	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 103	Mar. 15	Transmits text of Agreement signed by Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop on behalf of Germany and by Dr. Hacha and Dr. Chvalkovsky on behalf of Czecho-Slovakia in regard to future of Czech State.	255
257	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 104	Mar. 15	Refers to No. 255 and transmits text of Herr Hitler's order to armed forces on March 15 on their entry into Bohemia and Moravia.	256
258	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 105	Mar. 15	Reports announcement in press that Prague Government have issued an order that entry of German troops is not to be resisted and that their orders are in every case to be followed.	257
259	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 106	Mar. 15	Transmits text of proclamation of Chancellor dated March 15 announcing that Czecho-Slovakia has ceased to exist.	257
260	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 107	Mar. 15	Transmits text of report issued by High Command of German Army announcing entry of troops into Czecho-Slovakia.	258

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
261	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 108	Mar. 15	Reports information given to Assistant Military Attaché regarding military situation: German troops entering Bohemia had met with no opposition and occupation of Bohemia being continued.	258
262	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 82	Mar. 15	Reports information regarding events of night of March 14/15 after meeting of President of Republic and Herr Hitler.	258
263	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 83	Mar. 15	Refers to No. 262 and asks that information contained therein obtained from M. Krno may not be used in any way which might later embarrass him.	259
264	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 102	Mar. 15	Refers to No. 247 and reports that instructions were carried out early on morning of March 15 in a written communication to Herr von Ribbentrop.	259
265	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 110	Mar. 15	Understands that Herr Hitler refused any discussion with Czecho-Slovak Ministers and whole proceedings constituted nothing but an ultimatum under threat of aerial bombardment of Prague.	260
266	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	Mar. 15	Minute recording telephone message sent to Sir N. Henderson, Berlin, postponing visit of President of Board of Trade and Mr. Hudson.	260
267	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. Unnumbered to Geneva Tel. No. 22 to Foreign Office	Mar. 15	Transmits message for Secretary-General, League of Nations, stating that High Commissioner has reached Danzig and considers it may be necessary to return to Geneva in order to report verbally, so he thinks it desirable to mention this possibility in communiqué.	261
268	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 105	Mar. 15	Reports information given to Military Attaché by French General Staff regarding entry of German troops into Bohemia and Moravia; summarizes forecast of General Gauché regarding outcome of situation.	261
269	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 48	Mar. 15	Reports conversation with Vice-M.F.A. regarding Polish recognition of independence of Slovakia, Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia, entry of German troops into Slovakia and general situation.	262
270	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 106	Mar. 15	Reports information from M. Bonnet regarding reply received by French Ambassador in Berlin in response to his request for information concerning Czecho-Slovak crisis: M. Bonnet maintains opinion that intervention impossible, but thinks that Great Britain and France had better continue their rearmament as rapidly as possible.	263
271	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 111	Mar. 15	Reports conversation with Polish Ambassador who stated that his Government had already appointed a Minister to Slovakia.	263

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272	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 112	Mar. 15	Summarizes bulletin issued by Defence Ministry regarding advance of German troops into Bohemia and Moravia.	264
273	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 113	Mar. 15	Reports information from French Ambassador regarding his conversation with State Secretary concerning situation: Ambassador was referred to various official communiqués in reply to his request for information.	264
274	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 35	Mar. 15	Reports that Hungarian Prime Minister told Admiral Osborne that Hungary had obtained Germany's agreement in advance to action in Ruthenia.	265
275	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 23	Mar. 15	Reports that High Commissioner apprehends occupation of Free City during coming weekend by troops from East Prussia, hence his desire to return almost at once to Geneva.	265
276	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 128 Saving	Mar. 15	Reports comments of French press regarding dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia.	265
277	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 614	Mar. 15	Records conversation of Sir A. Cadogan with French Ambassador regarding Czecho-Slovak crisis and question as to what action, if any, should be taken by British and French Governments.	266
278	SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	Mar. 15	Note regarding copy of instructions sent to French Ambassador in Berlin by French Government.	268
	ANNEX 1		Copy of instructions sent by French Government to French Ambassador in Berlin dated March 15.	268
	ANNEX 2		Draft Note from French Ambassador in Berlin to German M.F.A. protesting against action of German Government regarding Czecho-Slovakia.	269
279	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 487	Mar. 15	Records conversation with German Ambassador when Dr. von Dirksen gave an account of situation culminating in entry into Czecho-Slovakia of German forces: Ambassador informed of deplorable effect German action would have on world opinion. Ambassador stated that only danger spots now left were Memel and Danzig: Herr Henlein had been appointed Statthalter of Bohemia.	270
280	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 619	Mar. 15	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding situation consequent on German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia: M. Corbin was told that beyond postponing visit to Berlin of President of Board of Trade and Secretary of Department of Overseas Trade, H.M.G. had taken no action. Ambassador stated that principal point of interest now with French Government was likely to be reaction of events upon policy of Italy.	272

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281	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 324	Mar. 15	Refers to No. 228 and reports action taken. transmits copy of reply of General Gamelin to Military Attaché's memorandum of March 14 with which he stated he was in complete agreement.	274
282	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 91	Mar. 16	Reports Air Attaché's account of arrival of first German troops in Prague.	275
283	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 115	Mar. 16	Transmits text of communiqué published in press of March 16 regarding administration of Bohemia and Moravia: executive power has been conferred on Commander-in-Chief of Army and will be exercised in his name by Cs.-in-C. of Armies in Bohemia and Moravia, assisted by Herr Henlein and Gauleiter Bürckel in charge of civil administration.	275
284	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 116	Mar. 16	Transmits text of proclamation dated March 15 issued by Commander-in-Chief of Army in Bohemia and Moravia to population.	276
285	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 118	Mar. 16	Reports announcement in press that all travel communications to and from provinces of Bohemia and Moravia now under German protection have been prohibited until further notice.	276
286	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 39	Mar. 16	Reports announcement in Parliament by Hungarian Prime Minister of decision to occupy whole of Ruthenia: Count Teleki added that advance of Hungarian Army did not threaten any territories bordering on Ruthenia.	277
287	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 51	Mar. 16	Transmits, for information of Mr. Stopford, text of references to Czech loan and refugee problem made in House of Commons by Prime Minister and Chancellor of Exchequer on March 15.	277
288	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 117	Mar. 16	Expresses view that there is no justification whatsoever for action of German Government in annexing Bohemia and Moravia: H.M.G. will doubtless consider what attitude to adopt towards a Government which is apparently set on domination by force of the whole Danube basin.	278
289	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 98	Mar. 16	Reports 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro's' message announcing that executive power in Bohemia will be in charge of General Blaskowitz and in Moravia in charge of General List: Herr Henlein will be attached to General Blaskowitz and Herr Bürckel to General List for all civil questions: Herr Henlein appointed head of Civil Administration by General Blaskowitz.	279
290	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 99	Mar. 16	Reports arrival of Herr Hitler in Prague on evening of March 15 accompanied by General Keitel, Herr von Ribbentrop, Herr Himmler, and others.	279

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291	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 100	Mar. 16	Reports formation of Czech National Committee to co-operate with German military administration: list of Committee published in press consists of twenty-five names headed by General Gajda.	280
292	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 104	Mar. 16	Reports information from H.M. Consul at Bratislava that Dr. Tiso has requested Herr Hitler to assume a protectorate over Slovakia.	280
293	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 24	Mar. 16	Refers to No. 275 and reports that Polish Commissioner generally recognizes possibility but definitely discounts probability of impending German military occupation of Danzig: High Commissioner feels that situation seems less tense today than yesterday and is accordingly disposed to defer for a while his return to Geneva.	280
294	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 39	Mar. 16	Reports information from M.F.A. that Roumanian Government had no intention of taking any action to embarrass Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia provided that Roumanian interests were not prejudiced: M.F.A. added that M. Volosin and members of his Government had taken refuge in Roumania and had invited Roumanian troops to occupy Ruthenia: invitation was declined.	281
295	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 187	Mar. 16	Reports M.F.A.'s observation to Counsellor regarding German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia and Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia. According to Hungarian Counsellor, Italians and Poles were pleased with development of events, but French Embassy have heard from good sources that proclamation of Protectorate over Slovakia as well as Bohemia and Moravia came as a surprise to Italian Government.	281
296	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 55 Saving	Mar. 16	Refers to No. 257 and comments on claim of Herr Hitler that his compatriots were subjected to 'an intolerable reign of terror' in Czecho-Slovakia: characterizes assertion as a cynical perversion of the truth.	282
297	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 96	Mar. 16	Records visit of Roumanian Minister who called on March 14 to discuss situation: M. Tilea expressed hope that H.M.G. would not tacitly acquiesce in Germany's successful manœuvre and offered suggestions regarding action which he thought H.M.G. should take: M. Tilea was informed that his suggestions would be considered.	283
298	SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	Mar. 16	Minute regarding conversation with Roumanian Minister who expressed fears of German Government's ultimate intentions towards Roumania and asked	284

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		whether H.M.G. would agree to loan of £10 millions to Roumania to be used for purchase of war material.	
299 MR. ORDE Riga No. 100	Mar. 16	Transmits copy of Kovno despatch No. 38 of March 13 recording a conversation which Mr. Preston had with Lithuanian Prime Minister regarding future of Memel.	285
300 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 111	Mar. 17	Reports information from H.M. Consul, Bratislava, regarding arrival of German troops in Slovakia: Bratislava itself had not been occupied: H.M. Consul also reports an interview given by leader of Hungarian minority welcoming independence of Slovakia and offering his co-operation.	287
301 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 112	Mar. 17	Summarizes decree issued by Herr Hitler to regulate constitutional position of Bohemia and Moravia.	287
302 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 113	Mar. 17	Reports that morning press publishes an exchange of telegrams between Dr. Tiso and Herr Hitler: Dr. Tiso's telegram requested Chancellor to take over protection of Slovak State to which Herr Hitler replied in affirmative.	288
303 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 117	Mar. 17	Summarizes broadcast statement made by Dr. Hacha, President of Republic, explaining why he had placed fate of Czech nation and State in hands of Herr Hitler.	289
304 SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 44	Mar. 17	Reports that Hungarian Prime Minister addressing Hungarian press on March 17 stated that he was most optimistic that there would be no opposition to Hungarian annexation of Ruthenia. According to Roumanian Minister, German Minister had told him that there would be no difficulties about Hungary taking over Ruthenia.	289
305 SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 46	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 304 and reports that in course of an informal talk German Minister confirmed that Germany was disinterested in Ruthenia and that Hungary had been given a free hand.	290
306 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 35	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 196 and intimates subjects which Secretary of State would be willing to discuss with M. Beck: comments on usefulness of discussing Jewish question.	290
307 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 41	Mar. 17	Refers to No. 294 and reports that Roumanian Government have indications that Hungary, after occupying whole of Ruthenia, intends to offer to discuss means of safeguarding Roumanian interests. Roumanians opposed to this plan: suggests action which might diminish risk of Roumanian-Hungarian incident.	291

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308	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 68	Mar. 17	Instructions to make representations to German Government protesting against repudiation of Munich Agreement and changes effected in Czecho-Slovakia by German military action which, in view of H.M.G., are devoid of any basis of legality.	291

CHAPTER IV

Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards Italian claims against France (January 20—April 2, 1939)

309	EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 46	Jan. 20	Reports information from Counsellor of Soviet Embassy purporting to be remarks of Count Ciano regarding results of visit of Prime Minister and Secretary of State to Rome. Discusses aims and ambitions of Italy and considers that situation requires greatest watchfulness on part of French Government and H.M.G.	292
310	To EARL OF PERTH Rome	Jan. 23	Letter from Mr. Ingram commenting on Rome despatch No. 1230 of December 31, 1938, regarding Italian intervention in Spain: obvious that Italy has not only broken Agreement of August 1936 regarding war material but also later Agreement of 1937 regarding men.	295
311	EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 63	Jan. 24	Reports conversation with French Ambassador whose conclusions regarding situation coincide with those reported in No. 309. M. François-Poncet considers that Italian Government have not yet decided what claims against France they will ultimately put forward: records also conversations with American and Belgian Ambassadors regarding Italian claims.	296
312	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 55	Jan. 25	Reports that official communiqué issued on January 25 announces that calling up of first quota of approximately 60,000 men of 1901 class has been ordered for February 1 for purposes of training and instruction.	298
313	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 59	Jan. 25	Refers to No. 312 and reports reply of M.F.A. to question as to why Italian Government had called up a quota of 1901 class.	298
314	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 32 Saving	Jan. 25	Reports conversation of H.M. Minister on January 24 with Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs who mentioned a conversation he had had with Counsellor of German Embassy regarding Italian colonial claims. M. Charvériat stated that Ministry were very conscious of German moderation with regard to	298

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		these claims. He attributed present un- easiness in Paris to approach of <i>dénouement</i> in Spain and to Signor Mussolini's speech of January 23.	
315 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 62	Jan. 26	Refers to No. 312 and transmits views of Military Attaché regarding this measure.	299
316 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 66	Jan. 30	Reports information given to Military Attaché by Italian Director of Military Intelligence regarding calling up of 60,000 reservists.	300
317 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 24 Saving	Jan. 30	Reports that H.M. Consul-General at Naples reported on January 26 that it appeared that men of 1920 class and those born between May 1 and December 3, 1919, were now being called up: submits observations of Military Attaché regarding measure.	301
318 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 68	Feb. 2	Reports publication in press of declaration said to have been made by high German official to Berlin correspondent of 'News Chronicle' regarding German support for Italy should latter be involved in war.	301
319 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 60	Feb. 3	Instructions to submit to M.F.A., and ask for his comments, information which has come to knowledge of H.M.G. regarding reinforcement of Italian troops in Libya, recruitment of Somalis in neighbourhood of British Somaliland, and movement of troops in direction of frontiers of French Somaliland.	302
320 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 61	Feb. 3	Refers to No. 317 and asks whether men of last eight months of 1919 class and men of 1920 class are to join the colours in 1939 or whether they are only being enrolled.	303
321 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 54	Feb. 3	Refers to No. 318 and explains why de- claration was given to Berlin correspondent of 'News Chronicle'.	303
322 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 70	Feb. 4	Refers to No. 320 and reports that accord- ing to Military Attaché's information men are only being enrolled. Military Attaché considers that this is normal.	304
323 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 71	Feb. 4	Reports rumour of calling up of further classes of reservists: Military Attaché, who has discussed matter with his French and American colleagues, is of opinion that nothing abnormal is happening.	304
324 EARL OF PERTH Rome	Feb. 4	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan expressing view that Italians are convinced that Britain will never fight unless directly threatened: suggests Prime Minister might make posi- tion clear in some public statement.	305
325 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 72	Feb. 5	Refers to No. 319 and reports action taken. Transmits observations of Count Ciano on certain of points raised.	306

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
326 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 73	Feb. 5	Message for Sir A. Cadogan regarding information received from reliable source that a good deal of secret calling up is going on and that present preparations much exceed in this respect those taken during September crisis.	307
327 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 77	Feb. 6	Refers to No. 325 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding numbers of Italian troops in Libya. Count Ciano stated that in view of French forces being sent to Tunis, Italian Government had felt it necessary to increase their garrisons in Libya.	307
328 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 79	Feb. 6	Reports gratification of French Ambassador at statement made by Prime Minister in House of Commons on February 6 concerning British support for France should any threat be made to her vital interests.	308
329 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 83	Feb. 8	Refers to No. 323 and reports that Military Attaché learns that many of the 60,000 men of 1901 class called up have been dismissed as unfit for service and that their places are being taken by men from all classes up to 1910: transmits observations of Military Attaché on this measure.	308
330 EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 122	Feb. 10	Summarizes press comments on supposed British attitude towards Italian claims against France before Prime Minister's statement in House on February 6: after statement immediate reaction of Italian correspondents in London was to endeavour to minimize significance of assurance given to France.	309
331 EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 131	Feb. 10	Refers to No. 329 and transmits memorandum by Military Attaché regarding recent call up of 60,000 men of 1901 class in Italy.	311
332 H.M. EMBASSY Rome	Feb. 10	Letter to Southern Department, Foreign Office, recording views of an official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Italian campaign against France: reports gist of conversation of member of staff with foreign journalist who gave his views regarding Italian claims in respect of Tunis.	313
333 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 73	Feb. 11	Instructions to see that Service Attachés continue to press Italian authorities for explanation of any military activities that may come to their notice, in order that Italian Government may realize that H.M.G. are fully aware of what is going on.	315
334 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 76	Feb. 11	Refers to No. 327 and states that H.M.G. cannot feel satisfied with explanation offered by Count Ciano for proposed large increase in Libyan garrison and indicates lines on which he should be spoken to.	315

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
335 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 92	Feb. 13	Refers to No. 334 and reports reply of M.F.A. to representations made to him.	316
336 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 81	Feb. 15	Instructions to bring to notice of M.F.A. article in 'Relazioni Internazionali' threatening France with war against Italy and Germany if she does not make certain unspecified concessions regarding Tunisia, Jibuti, Corsica, and Nice.	317
337 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 45 Saving	Feb. 15	Summarizes press comments on reported intention of British and French Governments to recognize General Franco's Government.	318
338 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 62	Feb. 16	Comments on Rome telegram No. 96 of February 14 reporting an article in 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' regarding Italy's 'just claims' against France.	319
339 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 111	Feb. 19	Refers to No. 336 and reports representations made to M.F.A. regarding article in question. Count Ciano stated that article must be held to represent only views of writer but he would neither confirm nor deny what had been written.	319
340 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 112	Feb. 19	Refers to No. 339 and comments on observations made by Count Ciano.	321
341 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 115	Feb. 20	Reports discussion with U.S. Ambassador regarding situation: transmits account of views held by Signor Landini, Press Counsellor of Italian Embassy in Paris, regarding Italian claims, which Ambassador had received from Paris.	321
342 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 120	Feb. 21	Reports summary of information received from Belgian colleague which latter had gathered from recent talks with various officials at Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Italian claims against France: according to what he had been told French Government now knew scope of Italian claims.	322
343 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 125	Feb. 22	Refers to Nos. 341 and 342 and points out that according to information received, emphasis is laid on fact that Signor Mussolini is prepared to go to war, if necessary, on question of status of Italian colony in Tunis: suggests that time has come to go into whole matter with French Government in order to avoid the possibility of such a catastrophe.	323
344 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 102	Feb. 25	Refers to Nos. 339 and 340 and states that Count Ciano's attitude is considered thoroughly unsatisfactory: instructions regarding representations to be made to him on occasion of next interview.	324

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
345	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 131	Feb. 27	Reports conversation with French colleague regarding Italian claims: Ambassador said that in his view Italians did not any longer attach overwhelming importance to Jibuti or Suez Canal questions, but were concentrating on Tunis, and stumbling block was likely to be Italian immigration.	325
346	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 132	Feb. 27	Reports interview with Signor Bastianini who stated that information had reached Italian Government that whole French military machine in North Africa was now in movement: Italian Government considered that this could only mean preparation for offensive: if movement continued they would, Signor Bastianini stated, be forced to increase very largely their forces in Libya.	325
347	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 134	Feb. 28	Reports representations made to Signor Bastianini regarding press attacks on France, and offensive articles which had appeared talking of British hypocrisy in connexion with recognition of General Franco's Government.	326
348	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 135	Feb. 28	Refers to No. 347 and explains why he talked to Signor Bastianini regarding matter.	327
349	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 138	Feb. 28	Reports observations of Yugoslav Military Attaché regarding recent call up of certain classes to the colours and comments of Military Attaché.	328
350	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 71	Feb. 28	Instructions to give M. Bonnet substance of No. 346 and suggest to him that if some action of nature suggested in paragraph 3 of No. 351 is not taken without delay, situation may become very difficult to control.	328
351	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 70	Feb. 28	Instructions to offer to M. Bonnet good offices of H.M.G. in endeavour to induce Italian Government to refrain from further concentrations in Libya in return for some corresponding undertaking on part of French Government: H.M.G. would also like to have M. Bonnet's views on general question of Franco-British co-operation in order to be ready for new situation which is likely to develop after recognition of General Franco's Government should Signor Mussolini now proceed to formulate his claims against France.	329
352	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 79	Mar. 1	Refers to Nos. 350 and 351 and reports action taken: M. Bonnet gave assurance that French troop movements were merely reply to very large Italian concentrations in Libya and would cease directly Italians stopped sending large reinforcements.	330

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
353 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	Mar. 1	Letter from Sir O. Sargent discussing reasons for French military movements in Tunisia and referring to an article in 'Revue des Deux Mondes' by General Armengaud giving a picture of French strength in that area.	331
354 EARL OF PERTH Rome	Mar. 1	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan recording conversation with French Ambassador when latter informed him of remarks he had made to Signor Bastianini regarding question of Franco-Italian conversations: reports observations made to Ambassador concerning dangers of troop concentrations in N. Africa, and records views of Yugoslav colleague regarding international situation.	332
355 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 106	Mar. 2	Refers to Nos. 347 and 348 and trusts that Ambassador will approach Count Ciano on his return to Rome on lines of No. 344.	333
356 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 85	Mar. 2	Refers to No. 352 and reports that Military Attaché will discuss question of Italian effectives in Libya at Ministry of War on March 3 at invitation of M.F.A. Assurance received from M. Bonnet that directly supplementary measures decided upon on February 24 were completed, no further French reinforcements would be sent unless Italians sent out more troops.	333
357 SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	Mar. 2	Minute recording conversation with French Ambassador regarding offer of H.M.G. to do anything possible to slow up Italian reinforcements in Libya.	334
358 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 276	Mar. 2	Refers to No. 342 and reports that, in reply to inquiry, M. Bonnet stated that he did not know what Italian demands might be: M.F.A. added that it would be impossible to begin conversations with Italians until all Italian troops had left Spain.	335
359 MR. CAMPBELL Paris	Mar. 2	Minute recording conversation with M. Léger who spoke very strongly against <i>démarche</i> by H.M.G. over despatch of French reinforcements to Tunisia, and gave his reasons for thinking that suggestion of H.M.G. might have opposite effect to that intended.	335
360 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 86	Mar. 3	Refers to No. 356 and transmits estimate given to Military Attaché of number of Italian troops in Libya.	337
361 EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 195	Mar. 3	Reports impressions gained by members of Embassy Staff, during visits to different parts of Italy, regarding war preparations in country.	337
362 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 89	Mar. 4	Refers to No. 352 and reports that French Government have promised to send written reply to <i>aide-mémoire</i> next week: M. Bonnet states that H.M. Ambassador in Rome may inform Count Ciano that French	339

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		Government do not dream of attacking Italians in Libya or anywhere else and he may add that if Italians abstain from sending any further reinforcements the French will do likewise.	
363 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 158	Mar. 5	Refers to No. 344 and reports reply of M.F.A. to representations made to him regarding press attacks.	340
364 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 160	Mar. 5	Refers to No. 362 and reports that while he is quite willing to convey M. Bonnet's assurances to Count Ciano, he fails to understand why M. Bonnet does not give instructions to French Ambassador to act in this sense: states that Italian press appears considerably quieter and hopes that French Government will bear in mind precedent that when Anglo-Italian talks began, Italian press attacks more or less ceased.	340
365 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 293	Mar. 8	Refers to No. 362 and transmits reply of French Government to H.M.G.'s representations regarding French and Italian reinforcements in N. Africa.	341
366 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 80	Mar. 11	Instructions regarding further action to be taken following receipt of reply of French Government concerning French and Italian forces in N. Africa (No. 365): suggests manner in which H.M. Ambassador in Rome might approach Count Ciano regarding matter, unless M. Bonnet would prefer to make a direct approach to Italian Government.	342
367 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 588	Mar. 11	Records conversation with French Ambassador when reasons for recent approach of H.M.G. to French Government regarding situation in N. Africa were explained: M. Corbin stated point of view of French Government, and said he did not think there had been any serious misunderstanding.	344
368 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 100	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 366 and reports action taken: M. Bonnet stated that he would prefer H.M. Ambassador to make communication to Count Ciano and indicates terms which he proposed should be used.	345
369 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 179	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 366 and states that he feels some hesitation in putting forward to Count Ciano suggestion that Italy could stop race in concentrations by reaching an understanding with French Government regarding garrisons in Libya similar to that reached with Great Britain in 1938.	346
370 TO EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 392	Mar. 13	Records conversation with Italian Ambassador regarding international situation: attention of Signor Grandi was drawn to deterioration in atmosphere since visit of Prime Minister and Secretary of State to Rome, and adverse effect on Italian rela-	346

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		tions with France owing to aggressive attitude of Italian press.	
371 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 118	Mar. 15	Instructions to approach Italian Government on lines suggested by M. Bonnet in No. 368.	347
372 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 186	Mar. 16	Refers to No. 371 and reports action taken. Count Ciano did not seem to be favourably impressed with what M. Bonnet had said and put forward Italian point of view, but he repeated that Italian Government had no warlike designs on Tunis whatsoever.	348
373 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 93	Mar. 19	Instructions to communicate report of interview in No. 372 to M. Bonnet and inform him of proposed reply to Count Ciano.	349
374 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 195	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 373 and comments on proposed reply to M.F.A.	349
375 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 196	Mar. 21	Compares wholly illegitimate actions of Germany with comparatively legitimate aspirations of Italy and suggests that if Signor Mussolini were given assurances that his claims would be given fair consideration, it would be more difficult for him to adopt violent measures.	349
376 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 198	Mar. 21	Reports that although Italians have received a severe shock from events in Czecho-Slovakia, it is not yet clear what effect they will have on policy of Government: refers to reported statement in 'Sunday Times' and considers that unnecessary emphasis on ideological or democratic nature of opposition to Germany can only have effect of inducing Italy to ally herself more closely with that country.	350
377 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 200	Mar. 21	Considers that while German action has upset Italian public opinion and probably shocked Signor Mussolini, it would be grave error to believe that if Signor Mussolini gave orders for Italian people to march against France he would not command absolute obedience.	351
378 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 48	Mar. 22	Instructions to inform Prince Paul in strict confidence of report just received regarding possible Italian move, to take place about April 1, to intervene in Yugoslavia to 'establish order' by an overwhelming display of armed force: this move would probably be accompanied by a landing in Albania.	351
379 SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 54	Mar. 23	Refers to No. 378 and reports that Prince Paul, while grateful for information, thinks it is now out of date, in view of personal message which he has just received from Signor Mussolini to effect that a strong and united Yugoslavia was more than ever an Italian interest.	352

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
380	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 89 Saving	Mar. 25	Instructions to inform French Government that, in existing circumstances, it is considered best to make no comment of any kind to Count Ciano on his interview with Sir N. Charles as reported in No. 372.	353
381	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 106	Mar. 28	Instructions to obtain interview with M. Daladier and endeavour to ascertain what he proposed to say in reply to statements in Signor Mussolini's speech regarding Italian claims against France: suggests line which he might take.	353
382	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 134	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 381 and reports interview with M. Daladier who intimated what he intended to say in reply to Signor Mussolini.	354
383	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 236	Mar. 30	Reports that according to high official in Ministry of Popular Culture, Italian Government regarded speech of M. Daladier with indifference: considers, however, that articles in Press seem to indicate desire to keep door open.	355
384	EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 278	Mar. 30	Transmits copy of Memorandum by Military Attaché regarding reports received about calling up of men to the Colours: agrees with Colonel Burrows that no action has been taken by Italian Government which would denote any immediate warlike intentions.	355
385	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 19	Mar. 31	Reports fresh rumours of Italian pressure on Albania.	357
386	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 243	Mar. 31	Transmits message for Sir A. Cadogan from Sir N. Charles describing interview with Count Ciano in which he asked latter whether, if it were found possible to arrange some form of contact between Paris and Rome, Italian Government would come forward willingly so that there might be a possibility of some amicable agreement being discussed: Count Ciano stated he would discuss matter with Signor Mussolini.	358
387	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 251	Apr. 2	Message for Sir A. Cadogan reporting information from French Embassy regarding Ambassador's view that settlement of Italian claims should present no great difficulty and that Italian Government are anxious to make an agreement with France quickly: French Ambassador awaiting instructions, but apparently there are certain elements in French Cabinet who are determined to prevent any <i>rapprochement</i> with Italy.	359

CHAPTER V

British proposals for the organization of mutual support against further German aggression: Memel: Anglo-French conversations of March 21-2 (March 17-23, 1939)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
388	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 88	Mar. 17	Instructions to explain to French Government reasons for action taken in Nos. 389 and 390 and to ask for their views.	360
389	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 31	Mar. 17	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister when latter gave an account of German demands on Roumania and inquired what attitude of H.M.G. would be if Roumania became victim of German aggression: instructions to inquire of Soviet Government whether they would, if requested by Roumanian Government, actively help latter to resist German aggression.	360
390	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 36 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 48 To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 49 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 40	Mar. 17	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister who gave an account of German demands on Roumania and inquired what attitude of H.M.G. would be if Roumania became victim of German aggression: he asked also whether it would make it easier for H.M.G. to decide their attitude if Poland and Roumania agreed to make treaty provision between them applicable as against German aggression and if Balkan Entente proclaimed their joint determination to guarantee each others frontiers: instructions to ask for views of M.F.A.	361
391	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 56	Mar. 17	Reports views of M.F.A. regarding rumours concerning Danzig and Memel. M. Beck stated that should Germany occupy Danzig, Poland would fight.	362
392	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 55	Mar. 17	Reports discussion with M.F.A. regarding question of common frontier with Hungary, Slovakia, and Polish alliance with Roumania: M. Beck stated that he was still endeavouring to bring about agreement between Hungary and Roumania as to their respective zones in Ruthenia.	362
393	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 134 Saving	Mar. 17	Reports conversation of H.M. Minister with Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs when Herr Hitler's probable next step discussed: M. Charvériat thought it possible that action might be taken in respect of Danzig and Memel. Political Director referred to action of German Embassy regarding question of transfer of Czecho-Slovak Legation in Paris to German Government, and gave his views regarding attitude of Poland in connexion with Hungarian action in Ruthenia.	363

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
394	To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 252	Mar. 17	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador regarding international situation, when Mr. Kennedy was informed of attitude of H.M.G. Ambassador agreed that one of most useful contributions President Roosevelt could make would be if he were able to secure some action quickly in regard to U.S. Neutrality Act. Mr. Kennedy telephoned later to say that action in this sense had been taken.	364
395	To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 99	Mar. 17	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister when M. Tilea asked that Roumanian Government should be granted a loan of £10 millions by H.M.G. to re-equip their military forces: Minister spoke of latest German demands and inquired attitude of H.M.G. in event of Roumania becoming victim of German aggression.	366
396	FRENCH EMBASSY London	Mar. 17	Transmits copy of Note which French Ambassador in Berlin was instructed to present to German M.F.A. protesting against action of German Government regarding Czecho-Slovakia.	368
397	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 44	Mar. 18	Requests cancellation of Nos. 390 and 389.	369
398	MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 4	Mar. 18	Reports information from Lithuanian Military Attaché that German <i>coup</i> at Memel is expected any day. Lithuanian Military Attaché positive that no military resistance would be offered unless limits of Memel district were passed.	369
399	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 45	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 397 and explains reason for asking that telegrams in question should be cancelled. M.F.A. in interview gave assurance that economic negotiations with Germany were proceeding on normal lines and stated that Roumanian Minister in London had entirely misrepresented situation: he asked that Secretary of State should not withdraw his entire confidence from M. Tilea.	369
400	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 58	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 390 and reports observations of M.F.A. when relevant portion of telegram communicated to him. M. Beck doubted that statements of Roumanian Minister in London were well founded, but said that he would go into matter fully with his Government. M. Beck stated confidentially that he had recently received assurances in Berlin that Reich did not support Hungary's claims in Roumania.	370
401	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 140	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 308 and reports action taken. State Secretary demurred at first to accepting Note but later accepted it: State Secretary obviously apprehensive regarding	371

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		Herr Hitler's reactions and later telephoned to ask that H.M.G. reconsider this written protest.	
402 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 112	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 388 and reports action taken: records observations of M. Daladier who said that M. Beck had asked the French Government whether latter would help Poland if Germany attacked Danzig: in reply French Government had said they would do so, but only on condition that Poland concluded defensive alliance with Roumania.	371
403 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 35	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 389 and reports questions put by M. Litvinov regarding attitude of H.M.G. to problem of Roumania, and their official reaction to seizure of Czechoslovakia: M. Litvinov also asked why Roumanian Government had not approached Soviet Government direct.	372
404 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 113	Mar. 18	Reports General Gamelin's impression that Herr Hitler's next victim will be Hungary and after that Roumania.	373
405 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 114	Mar. 18	Reports that, in speaking to H.M. Minister of situation arising out of German demands on Roumania, Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed doubts about probable attitude of Poland: records M. Léger's views regarding M. Beck and real object of his visit to London.	373
406 SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 67	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 390 and reports that substance of telegram was communicated to Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in absence of Greek Prime Minister: transmits personal comments of Under-Secretary regarding attitude of Greek Government. Subject to what Prime Minister may say, Sir S. Waterlow considers it would be dangerous to make decision of H.M.G. dependent on Balkan partners declaring their determination to guarantee one another's frontiers.	374
407 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 71	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 390 and reports that substance of telegram was communicated to M.F.A. who said it would be much easier for Turkish Government to reach decision if they knew what attitude H.M.G. would adopt. M.F.A. said he had already received somewhat similar information from Bucharest: he stated that Bulgarian President of Council was apprehensive of German attack on Roumania and had inquired what would be attitude of Balkan Entente in such a case.	374
408 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 115	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 402 and reports that M.F.A. has heard from Roumanian Ambassador that first German demand on Roumania was made some weeks ago and is now out	375

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		of date: Roumanian Government now considering much more reasonable suggestion by Germany. M. Bonnet promised written reply after Cabinet meeting on March 19 and said that he felt it was essential, before help was promised to Roumania, to know attitude of other Powers concerned.	
409 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 40	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 390 and states that on March 18 Roumanian Minister inquired whether H.M.G. would grant Roumania a loan of £10 millions to enable Government to re-equip their military forces and develop their Air Force.	375
410 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 139 Saving	Mar. 18	Reports announcement that M.F.A. has instructed French Ambassador at Berlin to make a protest to German M.F.A. against situation created in Czecho-Slovakia in violation of Munich Agreement: it is added that British Ambassador in Berlin has been instructed by H.M.G. to make a similar protest: recall of French Ambassador from Berlin also announced.	376
411 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 141 Saving	Mar. 18	Refers to No. 410 and reports that M. Bonnet contemplates keeping M. Coulonde in France for about a week or ten days.	376
412 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 643	Mar. 18	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on March 16 regarding French Government's decision to make formal protest to German Government against their action regarding Czecho-Slovakia: French Government would be glad to know whether H.M.G. would join in making similar declaration to German Government.	377
413 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 650	Mar. 18	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding question of Memel: M. Corbin informed of communication made by Lithuanian Minister inquiring attitude of H.M.G. in certain circumstances, and reply returned to him.	378
414 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 651	Mar. 18	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding disposal of Czecho-Slovak Legation in Paris, and protests to German Government by H.M.G. and French Government: M. Corbin regarded latest developments between German and Italian Governments as suggesting possibility of next point of attack being Croatia.	378
415 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 652	Mar. 18	Records that during course of conversation with French Ambassador, M. Corbin referred to question of Roumania and stated that Roumanian Minister had conveyed to him same information as he had to Secretary of State: Ambassador informed of action taken regarding matter.	379

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
416	To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 254	Mar. 18	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador regarding question of Roumania, and action taken by H.M.G. Comments of Mr. Kennedy on public opinion in U.S.A. regarding international situation.	380
417	To SIR G. OGILVIE- FORBES Berlin No. 513	Mar. 18	Records conversation with German Ambassador who asked to be informed of reasons for recall of H.M. Ambassador in Berlin.	380
418	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	Mar. 18	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan referring to No. 405 and transmitting memorandum by Mr. Campbell recording other points made by M. Léger, viz. position of Poland and Soviet Union in event of German aggression on Roumania, and German aims regarding Danzig and Memel: memorandum contains summary of discussion on telephone, in Mr. Campbell's presence, between M. Léger and M. Daladier regarding recall of M. Coulondre from Berlin.	381
419	MR. WALTERS League of Nations Geneva	Mar. 18	Letter to Mr. Randall, Foreign Office, describing conversation with M. Burckhardt who gave account of his reasons for leaving Danzig: suggests that Mr. Randall should come to Geneva to discuss matter with M. Avenol and M. Burckhardt.	383
420	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 48	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 390 and reports action taken: Prince Regent inquired what H.M.G. proposed to do and expressed surprise that Roumanian Government should have taken such a step in London without saying a word to Belgrade. Later Prince Regent telephoned that M.F.A. had information which seemed to show that Roumanian Minister had exaggerated situation.	384
421	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 36	Mar. 19	Refers to Nos. 397 and 403 and reports conversation with M. Litvinov regarding suspension of action concerning Roumania: M.F.A. stated that his Government took view that best course would be to summon a conference in Bucharest of delegates from Britain, U.S.S.R., France, Poland, and Roumania to discuss possibilities and consider action.	385
422	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 50 To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 52 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 42 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 38	Mar. 19	Instructions to suspend action, if not already taken, on No. 390 pending further instructions.	386

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
423	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 72	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 407 and transmits reply of Turkish Government.	386
424	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 73	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 423 and defines position of Turkish Government: considers they are anxious for some lead from H.M.G. but thinks they are in any case well disposed.	386
425	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 68	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 406 and reports that Greek Prime Minister is consulting other members of Balkan Entente and until he knows their views is unable to give an indication of line Greek Government will take: reports observations of Prime Minister regarding matter.	387
426	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 49	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 420 and describes difficulties of Yugoslavia's position: suggests action which she is likely to take in event of German attack on Roumania.	388
427	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 39 To MR. GASCOIGNE Budapest Tel. No. 7	Mar. 19	Instructions to represent to Polish/Hungarian Government importance which H.M.G. attach at this juncture to avoidance of any Hungarian-Roumanian clash over Ruthenia.	389
428	To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 44	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 399 and records interview of Sir A. Cadogan with Roumanian Minister: latter said he had been instructed to give categorical denial of ultimatum story, but he still was convinced that it had been presented and refused: what he now feared was that refusal would not be maintained.	389
429	To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 45	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 428: instructions to endeavour to see King and ask him to state fully (a) precise sequence of events, (b) present position, and (c) views and intentions of Roumanian Government as to future as they see it.	390
430	MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 3 to Riga Tel. No. 11 to F.O.	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 398 and reports that Lithuanian General Staff categorically deny story of Lithuanian Military Attaché regarding Memel. Lithuanian Government, whilst hoping to retain port facilities, reconciled to possibility of 'Anschluss' which no doubt could be effected without serious opposition.	390
431	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 20 Saving	Mar. 19	Refers to No. 399 and reports that Roumanian Minister in London had been ordered to return to Bucharest but was to be allowed to wait until after visit of French President to London.	391
432	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 189	Mar. 19	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador during which M. Maisky was told of H.M.G.'s views on question of Danzig: alleged German demands on Roumania discussed.	391

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
433 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 190	Mar. 19	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador when Soviet proposal to hold a conference in Bucharest was discussed. M. Maisky was informed that H.M.G. were considering another proposal which, they felt, might achieve quicker results, but possibly conference procedure might be appropriate at later stage.	392
434 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 340	Mar. 19	Transmits copy despatch from Military Attaché of March 18 respecting military importance of absorption of Moravia and Bohemia into German Reich.	393
435 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 147	Mar. 20	Reports that French Ambassador is definitely of opinion that <i>fait accompli</i> in Czecho-Slovakia should be promptly recognized and will advise his Government that delay will only irritate Germans.	394
436 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 119	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 408 and reports that M.F.A. promises written reply on afternoon of March 20 after it has received approval of President of Council.	395
437 SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 54	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 427 and reports assurance of M.F.A. that Hungarian Government also attached greatest importance to avoiding any clash with Roumania: Count Csaky said he would be most grateful if H.M.G. would exercise their influence with Roumanian Government to persuade them to stop mobilization.	395
438 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 51	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 429 and reports visit to Polish Ambassador when he inquired whether there was anything Ambassador could add to account of his audience with King (see No. 400), e.g. had King given any indication that he anticipated any immediate action by Germany against Roumania: reply was definitely negative.	396
439 SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 74	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 425 and transmits Greek Government's reply to inquiry regarding their attitude in event of German attack on Roumania.	396
440 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 121	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 436 and transmits summary of reply of French Government to inquiry regarding their attitude in event of German attack on Roumania.	396
441 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 155	Mar. 20	Reports information received by Assistant Military Attaché from his Lithuanian colleague that Lithuanian M.F.A. visited Herr von Ribbentrop on March 19 to discuss Memel: latter stated that Lithuanian Government must hand over Memel graciously to Germany and warned Lithuanian M.F.A. of consequences if they did not.	397

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
442	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 60	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 391 and reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding rumours of German military activity in East Prussia.	398
443	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 56	Mar. 20	Refers to Nos. 428-9 and reports assurance received from King that there had been no ultimatum from Germany: there was much in German proposals that was unpalatable but no exception could be taken to manner in which they were presented.	398
444	To SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 202 To SIR W. SELBY Lisbon Tel. No. 44 To SIR M. PETERSON Bagdad Tel. No. 73	Mar. 20	Refers to Nos. 446 and states that contents should not be communicated to Government to which accredited pending further instructions.	399
445	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 57 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 47 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 55 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 47	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 446 and states that contents are for personal and confidential information only and not for communication to Government to which accredited: indicates reply which can be made to any inquiries regarding present position.	399
446	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 94 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 34 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 43	Mar. 20	States that in spite of doubts as to accuracy of report of German ultimatum to Roumania, it seems to H.M.G. desirable to proceed without delay to organization of mutual support, and suggests publication of Declaration to be signed by French, Soviet, Polish, and British Governments of which text is transmitted: instructions to obtain views of Government to which accredited.	400
447	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 61	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 427 and reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding attitude of Polish Government in event of Roumania being attacked by Germany or Hungary, and present state of Roumanian-Hungarian relations. Records fears of Vice-M.F.A. that there might be collusion between Germany and Hungary and even some arrangement by which latter should attack Roumania with object of recovering Transylvania.	401
448	PRIME MINISTER	Mar. 20	Letter to Signor Mussolini expressing anxiety felt by H.M.G. regarding rumours of new <i>coup</i> being planned by Herr Hitler and appealing to him to use his influence to preserve peace of Europe.	402

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
449 MR. NEWTON Prague No. 127	Mar. 20	Reports facts of President Hacha's visit to Berlin on March 14 when he decided to make direct appeal to Herr Hitler in a last effort to avert occupation of Czecho-Slovakia.	403
450 MR. PARES Bratislava No. 15	Mar. 20	Transmits copy of despatch No. 10 to H.M. Minister, Prague, of March 20, respecting crisis in Slovakia and declaration of Slovak independence.	406
451 MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 343	Mar. 20	Refers to No. 440 and transmits copy of Note, dated March 18, addressed to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their reply, dated March 20, respecting German pressure on Roumania.	409
452 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 93	Mar. 20	Summarizes M. Stalin's report, on behalf of Central Committee, made to Eighteenth Congress of All Union Communist party, in which he attacked the democracies, gave outline of Soviet foreign policy, and appreciation of internal situation.	411
453 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 56A	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 443 and reports that, before leaving for audience with King, he was given paper which purported to be summary of German draft Trade Agreement: without revealing possession of summary he asked King if he could be given detailed information of German proposals and latter replied that perhaps this could be done privately.	419
454 TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 135	Mar. 21	Transmits information for State Department and President regarding Roumanian Minister's representations concerning German pressure on Roumania and action taken by H.M.G.	420
455 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 156	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 441 and emphasizes secrecy of information contained therein.	421
456 MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 4 to Riga Tel. No. 12 to F.O.	Mar. 21	Reports that Lithuanian M.F.A. returns to Kovno on March 21: before leaving Berlin he telephoned his Government that situation was 'very serious'.	421
457 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 58	Mar. 21	Transmits summary of statement, which Roumanian First Secretary will present to Secretary of State on arrival in London, regarding attitude of Roumanian Government in face of possible attack on Roumania by Germany or Hungary.	421
458 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	Mar. 21	Record of conversations between British and French Ministers in London regarding recent developments in German-Roumanian relations and action to be taken in endeavour to stop German aggression.	422
459 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 63	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 446 and reports action taken: Vice-M.F.A.'s first reaction was fear as to what effect Declaration would have on attitude of Germany towards Poland: M. Arciszewski also mentioned	428

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		difficulty for Poland of military or political co-operation with U.S.S.R.	
460 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 64	Mar. 21	Reports latest developments in situation between Roumania and Hungary as received from Vice-M.F.A.: in reply to question Vice-M.F.A. gave his opinion regarding attitude of Polish Government in event of Hungary attacking Roumania.	428
461 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 39	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 446 and reports action taken: M. Litvinov stated that in view of misleading reports in press he had been compelled to publish official communiqué stating that Soviet Government had proposed a six-Power Conference: M. Litvinov expressed belief that Polish Government would not commit themselves to a Declaration of nature proposed.	429
462 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 40	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 461 and transmits text of Soviet communiqué.	430
463 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 67	Mar. 21	Reports visit received from Lithuanian Minister and Lithuanian Minister in Prague: latter stated that German Government had presented what amounted to ultimatum; they had demanded immediate cession of Memelland to Reich and had given Lithuanian Government approximately four days to make their decision.	430
464 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 59	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 457 and reports that M.F.A. wished it to be made clear that statement was drawn up before Secretary of State's speech of March 20: they deprecate suggestion of general pact of mutual assistance as possibly provocative to Germany and because opinion in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Roumania would be opposed to inclusion of Russia.	431
465 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 66	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 459 and discusses difficulties of Polish Government's position regarding proposed Declaration.	431
466 To SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 213 To SIR W. SELBY Lisbon Tel. No. 46 To SIR M. PETERSON Bagdad Tel. No. 78	Mar. 21	Instructions not to convey text of No. 444 to Government to which accredited, but merely say that H.M.G. are approaching French, Soviet, and Polish Governments in regard to possibility of common consultation with view to offering joint resistance to any threat to independence of any European State.	432
467 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 62	Mar. 21	Reports information from Minister of Court that Hungarian mobilization is acquiring threatening proportions and Roumanians have almost certain knowledge that 25 German divisions are on Hungarian frontier: in circumstances general mobilization has been ordered. Bulgarian troops reported to be moving towards Dobrudja.	433

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
468 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 63	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 453 and reports information from Minister of Court that result of negotiations with Herr Wohltat has been that Germans have given way on all points regarded by Roumania as essential, but that Germans are insisting on Agreement being kept secret to which Roumanian Government cannot agree.	433
469 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 122	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 446 and reports that Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has telephoned to say that he is recommending to President of Council that French Government should agree to proposal of H.M.G. and that M.F.A. is to discuss matter with Secretary of State on afternoon of March 21.	434
470 SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 20 Saving	Mar. 21	Refers to No. 305 and reports friendly messages exchanged between Hungarian M.F.A. and German M.F.A. following Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia.	434
471 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 146	Mar. 21	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador regarding visit of M. Beck, relations between Hungary and Roumania, Polish-Roumanian Alliance, and proposed Declaration to be signed and published by Governments of United Kingdom, France, Poland, and Soviet Union agreeing to consult together regarding steps to be taken against any threat to independence of any European State.	434
472 TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 115	Mar. 21	Records conversation with Turkish Ambassador when latter informed generally of action taken by H.M.G. with view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression: M. Aras, in reply to inquiry regarding attitude of Turkish Government, said that if assured of British co-operation they would be prepared to go to war if Great Britain did—they would only depart from neutrality if they were on the same side as Great Britain.	436
473 MR. NEWTON Prague No. 129	Mar. 21	Reports account of events leading up to declaration of independence of Slovakia.	438
474 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 351	Mar. 21	Transmits account of sequence of events which led up to five days' crisis culminating in total dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia by Germany.	440
475 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 100	Mar. 21	Transmits translation of Note addressed by Soviet Government to German Ambassador in Moscow on March 18 in reply to Notes of March 16 and 17, in which Count Schulenburg had notified Soviet Government of incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia in German Reich: summarizes press comments on exchange of Notes.	445

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
476	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 101	Mar. 21	Reports views regarding Soviet Government's probable attitude in event of German aggression on Roumania.	448
477	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels No. 154	Mar. 21	Transmits copy of despatch from Military Attaché recording a conversation with Dutch Military Attaché regarding international situation and possible German ultimatum to Holland: suggests that Dutch now thoroughly alarmed regarding situation.	450
478	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 69	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 463 and reports reply of M.F.A. in response to question regarding attitude of Polish Government to ultimatum to Lithuania concerning Memel. Considers that Poland will take no action if only Memelland is in question: M.F.A. anxious to know attitude of H.M.G. in event of German pretensions going beyond Memelland.	452
479	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 68	Mar. 22	Reports first reactions of M.F.A. to proposed Declaration: inquires whether he may communicate to M. Beck purport of any telegrams regarding Soviet attitude received from Moscow.	453
480	MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 5 to Riga Tel. No. 13 to F.O.	Mar. 22	Reports statement received from Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding cession of Memelland to Germany.	454
481	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 163	Mar. 22	Sums up position in Germany following dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia: discusses possible German denunciation of Anglo-German Naval Agreement, points out propaganda value of catch-word 'encirclement', and sends note of warning regarding signature and publication of any formal declaration as outlined in No. 446.	455
482	MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 6 to Riga Tel. No. 14 to F.O.	Mar. 22	Reports real position at Memel: Lithuanian troops, with exception of one battalion, have evacuated town and Lithuanian military authorities have given instructions that incidents are to be avoided at all costs; German regulars expected to enter territory at any time.	456
483	MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 124	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 469 and reports that Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just stated that reply of French Government to proposal of H.M.G. regarding Declaration is without reserve or comment in affirmative, and that they welcome initiative taken by H.M.G. with which they are in full agreement.	457
484	RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	Mar. 22	Record of conversations between British and French Ministers regarding European situation.	457

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
485 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 72	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 479 and reports proposal, which Polish Ambassador is to place before Secretary of State, that H.M.G. and Polish Government should immediately enter into a secret agreement of consultation in sense of proposed Declaration.	463
486 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 74	Mar. 22	Reports interview with M. Beck regarding conversation of Polish Ambassador in London with Secretary of State. M. Beck stated that Poland would not submit to any ultimatum regarding Danzig, but felt that they must have an exchange of views with German Government and try to reach some definite settlement.	464
487 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 71	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 478 and reports M.F.A.'s views regarding Memel: M. Beck thought that if Lithuanian Government showed signs of resisting further domination, it might be advisable that she be offered support of an economic nature to strengthen her powers of resistance.	464
488 To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 139	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 454 and summarizes reactions to inquiries based upon Roumanian Minister's information regarding German pressure on Roumania, for information of State Department and President.	465
489 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 76	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 485 and suggests reasons why M. Beck's offer of secret discussions should not be rejected.	466
490 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 42	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 461 and reports that Soviet Government agree to proposed Declaration and will give their signature as soon as both France and Poland have accepted proposal and promised their signatures.	467
491 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 125	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 483 and reports that French Government in their official reply give their entire consent to H.M.G.'s proposal regarding Declaration.	467
492 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 151 Saving	Mar. 22	Refers to No. 411 and reports that French Ambassador in Berlin is not likely to return to his post for an indefinite period.	468
493 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 152 Saving	Mar. 22	Reports views of Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs on subject of Memel. In M. Léger's opinion no action on part of France and Great Britain was called for.	468
494 MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 156 Saving	Mar. 22	Reports observations of Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding attitude of Polish Government to question of assistance to Roumania should latter be attacked by Germany: M. Léger said that French Government were not satisfied with attitude of Poland and suggested that H.M.G. should press their proposal for a Declaration on Polish Government with clear and firm language.	468

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
495	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 62 Saving	Mar. 22	Reports that according to Czech Press Bureau, President Hacha communicated to President of Council a decision with regard to dissolution of Parliament: also reported in press that a 'Committee of National Community' was to be formed whose task it would be to unite all political groups in a single movement: General Gayda not included.	469
496	MR. ROBERTS Foreign Office	Mar. 22	Memorandum summarizing replies received to recent inquiries addressed to countries likely to be affected by further German expansion.	470
497	TO MR. ORDE Riga No. 69	Mar. 22	Records conversation with Lithuanian Minister who called to give an account of circumstances in which Memelland had been ceded to Germany: informs of reply given to M. Balutis in response to question regarding attitude of H.M.G. should German demands go beyond question of Memel.	474
498	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 65	Mar. 22	Transmits appreciation by Military Attaché of present military situation of Poland in view of recent events.	476
499	SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 332	Mar. 22	Transmits copy of Note addressed to German Chargé d'Affaires in Washington by Department of State signifying the refusal of the United States Government to recognize the Reich Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia.	481
500	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 168	Mar. 23	Reports press announcement that Herr Hitler, together with Admiral Raeder and General Keitel, left on evening of March 22 for Swinemünde to embark on 'Deutschland' en route for Memel.	482
501	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 170	Mar. 23	Transmits text published in press of Treaty between Germany and Lithuania regarding cession to Germany of Memel territory.	483
502	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 53 TO SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 9	Mar. 23	Instructions to use best endeavours to smooth over differences between Hungary and Roumania, either alone or in concert with French and Polish colleagues.	484
503	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 54	Mar. 23	Refers to No. 502: instructions to urge Roumanian Government that in taking such precautionary measures as they may consider necessary owing to uncertain situation, they should use every endeavour to make it clear that these measures are not aggressive in character.	484
504	TO SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 10	Mar. 23	Refers to No. 502: instructions to urge Hungarian Government to make it clear that any military measures which they feel it necessary to take in view of general	485

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		situation are in no way directed against Roumania who has no aggressive intentions towards them.	
505 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 43	Mar. 23	Transmits message from Mr. Hudson regarding conversation with M. Litvinov on subject of policy to be adopted to resist aggression.	485
506 To MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 695	Mar. 23	Records conversation of Sir A. Cadogan with French Ambassador on March 20 regarding proposed Declaration: M. Corbin disagreed with text of Declaration which seemed to him would confirm impression that Powers were not disposed to take any action and would only talk when a threat arose.	486
507 To MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 708	Mar. 23	Records conversation with M. Bonnet on subjects of Germany's aims, advisability of avoiding an appearance of trying to encircle Germany, Franco-Italian differences, French aircraft production, possible conscription in United Kingdom, and return to Berlin of British and French Ambassadors.	487
508 MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 357	Mar. 23	Transmits copy of Note from Ministry of Foreign Affairs signifying assent of French Government to proposed Four-Power Declaration.	490

CHAPTER VI

The announcement of the British guarantee to Poland (March 24-April 3, 1939)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
509 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 213	Mar. 24	Reports view of Hungarian Minister that if Great Britain linked up with Soviet Russia on European security she would automatically indispose a large number of other countries who were violently anti-Soviet: considers there is much force in this view, especially as regards Italy.	492
510 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 173	Mar. 24	Reports comments of 'Völkischer Beobachter' on Sir S. Hoare's statements in House of Commons regarding German Government's alleged ultimatum to Lithuania and return of Memelland to Reich.	493
511 SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 55	Mar. 24	Refers to Nos. 420 and 426 and reports views of Prince Regent on question of creating common front.	494
512 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 135	Mar. 24	Instructions to inform Italian Government of instructions sent to H.M. Ministers at Budapest and Bucharest, as contained in No. 502.	494
513 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 177	Mar. 24	Summarizes speech of Herr Hitler to Memellanders at Memel on March 23.	495

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
514	To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 142	Mar. 24	Refers to No. 488 and transmits, for information of State Department and President, summary of final replies of French and Soviet Governments and preliminary indication of Polish Government's views regarding proposed Declaration: states that extensive mobilization measures have been undertaken in Hungary and Roumania and that position is dangerous: summarizes attitude of Turkish Government.	495
515	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 80	Mar. 24	Reports effect on Polish public opinion of signature by Germany of one-sided Treaties with Lithuania, Slovakia, and Roumania: M. Beck's policy criticized in Parliament and in press.	497
516	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 104	Mar. 24	Records interview with Greek Minister when M. Simopoulos was informed of progress of negotiations being undertaken with a view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression: attitude of Bulgaria and position in Albania discussed.	497
517	To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 280	Mar. 24	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador regarding international situation: Mr. Kennedy was assured that there was no danger of H.M.G. deluding themselves with belief that bold words would suffice if they were confronted with German threats of further acts of aggression.	499
518	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 155	Mar. 24	Refers to No. 485 and records conversation with Polish Ambassador who called to make communication foreshadowed therein regarding attitude of Polish Government towards proposed Declaration: Count Raczynski also spoke of Hungarian-Roumanian relations and stated that Polish Government had continued to make representations both at Budapest and Bucharest.	500
519	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 44	Mar. 25	Transmits message from Mr. Hudson describing progress of preliminary negotiations regarding Anglo-Soviet Commercial Treaty: question of settlement of old-standing debts discussed.	503
520	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 186	Mar. 25	Reports information from Polish Military Attaché that Polish Government had flatly turned down recent proposals made by Germans, through Polish Ambassador in Berlin, that Poland should join anti-Comintern Pact: Polish Military Attaché added that it was necessary for Polish Government to proceed with great caution regarding Danzig.	504

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
521	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 185	Mar. 25	Reports information received by Military Attaché from German War Office in reply to inquiries regarding military measures now in progress, with particular reference to territories affected by recent operations.	505
522	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 187	Mar. 25	Transmits, for information of War Office, appreciation by Military Attaché regarding ability of German army to fight a war on two fronts.	505
523	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 83	Mar. 25	Refers to No. 524 and reports further information regarding Polish mobilization and suggests possible reason for this: draws attention to statement made by M. Beck and Vice-M.F.A. that Danzig question must be discussed soon.	506
524	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 82	Mar. 25	Reports conversation with Vice-M.F.A. regarding possibilities of German action in Danzig and Polish reactions: suggests that it is not inconceivable that M. Beck might seek to extricate himself by placing responsibility for Danzig on shoulders of League of Nations.	506
525	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 219	Mar. 25	Reports information from M.F.A. that Signor Mussolini had received Prime Minister's letter (No. 448) and much appreciated Mr. Chamberlain's action in writing to him: Signor Mussolini would send reply when he had considered matter.	507
526	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 37	Mar. 25	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador concerning present position regarding proposed Declaration.	508 x
527	SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 27 Saving	Mar. 25	Reports conversation with M.F.A. who spoke of disquieting news he had received of growing spirit of defeatism in Holland and Switzerland: records reply of M.F.A. to question as to whether Belgian Government were taking any measures to meet danger arising out of an attack on Holland.	508
528	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 45	Mar. 26	Refers to No. 490 and reports information from M. Litvinov regarding his conversation with Polish Ambassador concerning proposed Declaration. M.F.A. appears to be suspicious that H.M.G. have not at heart abandonment of policy of giving way before German aggression.	509
529	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 55	Mar. 26	Further record of conversation with Polish Ambassador on March 21 regarding Hungarian-Roumanian relations, proposed Declaration and question of Danzig: records further conversation on March 24 regarding Polish proposal for a confidential bi-lateral understanding between Great Britain and Poland.	510

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
530	SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 75	Mar. 26	Reports information from Roumanian Legation that Roumanian Minister had been handed Note by Hungarian M.F.A. stating that Hungarian Government would revoke recent military measures twenty-four hours after Roumanians had begun to do the same: as Roumanian Minister was leaving Count Csaky said that he would arrange for demobilization to begin at once.	511
531	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 47	Mar. 27	Transmits message from Mr. Hudson reporting that he is to receive later in the day information as to whether Soviet Union are prepared to open negotiations for a durable treaty: from press communiqué which M. Litvinov has mentioned it seems that some political questions may be raised and on them may depend formal agreement to trade negotiations.	511
532	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 38	Mar. 27	Refers to No. 531 and states that while nature of press communiqué is not clear, it is most desirable that there should be no mention of any political questions therein.	512
533	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 48	Mar. 27	Refers to No. 531 and transmits message from Mr. Hudson reporting that Soviet Government have promised further negotiations in London and stating that communiqué would be released at midnight.	512
534	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 84	Mar. 27	Reports conversation with German Ambassador regarding Danzig question: Ambassador said that while no special step had been taken on either side, question was in continual discussion and efforts were being made to bridge gap between extreme German demands and Polish objections.	513
535	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 86	Mar. 27	Refers to No. 534 and reports that M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet does not expect any special tension regarding Danzig in next few days such as might prevent M. Beck's visit to London: Polish military precautions, he stated, were meant to impress Germany. Considers Polish public opinion unprepared for even reasonable concessions over Danzig and that army probably takes same die-hard attitude.	513
536	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 87	Mar. 27	Reports visit of Military Attaché to Danzig and Gdynia: Military Attaché considers that present total number of men called up is unlikely to exceed half a million.	514
537	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 105	Mar. 27	Instructions to give M. Bonnet copy of contents of No. 538 and ask him whether he would be prepared to send similar instructions to French Ambassadors at Warsaw and Bucharest: hopes that French Government will co-operate with H.M.G.	514

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		in endeavouring to secure assistance in certain circumstances from Soviet Government.	
538 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 56 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 65	Mar. 27	Records that inquiries have shown that it will not be possible to proceed without modification with proposed Four-Power Declaration and that some alternative method of approach must be sought: outlines proposal to be put before Polish/Roumanian Governments for mutual assistance in case of German attack: instructions to consult French colleague and thereafter speak to M.F.A. accordingly. Action on present telegram not to be taken pending further instructions.	515
539 MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 7 Saving to Riga Tel. No. 18 to F.O.	Mar. 27	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding annexation of Memel by Germany: M.F.A. characterized attitude of Lithuanian people as one of determination to resist by force any further encroachment on their territory or independence: transmits views on present situation.	517
540 To MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 727	Mar. 27	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on March 25 regarding negotiations with Polish Government: M. Corbin said French Government thought that Polish and German Governments were now discussing some new arrangement regarding Danzig: scope and effect of German-Roumanian Agreement also discussed.	519
541 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 116	Mar. 27	Records conversation of Roumanian Minister with Sir A. Cadogan on March 23 when he left with Sir A. Cadogan memorandum stating policy of Roumanian Government towards any attack on her territory: M. Tilea emphasized again urgent need of Roumanian Government for loan.	520
542 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade No. 79	Mar. 27	Records conversation with Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires when M. Milanovitch was given an outline of action being taken by H.M.G. with view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression: informs of reply given to M. Milanovitch in answer to question regarding attitude of H.M.G. should Yugoslavia be attacked.	521
543 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 387E	Mar. 27	Reports press announcement that Lithuanian Delegation, which was in Berlin for signing of German-Lithuanian Political Treaty of March 22, has suggested that economic negotiations provided for under Article 2 of Treaty, should take place in Berlin during week after Easter.	523
544 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 131	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 537 and reports action taken.	523

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
545	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 49	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 532 and reports that it was impossible to get into touch with M. Litvinov until after communiqué had been issued to provincial press: considers that communiqué contains nothing to which objection can be taken and presents a picture of friendliness and contacts but no obligations.	523
546	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 58	Mar. 28	Indicates opening remarks to be made to M.F.A. when instructions are received to act in accordance with No. 538.	524
547	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 88	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 535 and reports information from Vice-M.F.A. regarding Danzig situation: Vice-M.F.A. outlined limits to which he thought Polish Government could go in order to effect settlement of question.	524
548	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 194	Mar. 28	Summarizes comments in 'National Zeitung' regarding alleged attacks by members of Polish Western League on Germans.	525
549	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 147	Mar. 28	Records for information of State Department and President steps being taken by H.M.G. to prevent German Government from extending their control over certain countries in Central and Eastern Europe, notably Roumania and Poland.	526
550	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 195	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 534 and reports that Polish Ambassador confirms that Danzig question is at present under discussion in Warsaw.	528
551	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 148	Mar. 28	Refers to No. 549 and transmits purport of draft instructions for H.M. Ambassador at Warsaw and H.M. Minister at Bucharest (See No. 538).	528
552	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 214	Mar. 28	Records conversation of Soviet Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on March 23 regarding progress of negotiations concerning proposed Declaration, attitude of Italian Government, and reports that H.M.G. and French Governments had pledged themselves to defence of Holland and Switzerland.	530
553	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 741	Mar. 28	Records conversation with French Ambassador on subjects of disclosure in Paris of British air production figures given in confidence to M. Bonnet, visit of French Air Minister to London, Franco-Italian relations, German-Polish conversations, and question of return of British and French Ambassadors to Berlin.	532
554	TO MR. ORDE Riga No. 75	Mar. 28	Transmits copy of <i>aide-mémoire</i> communicated by Lithuanian Minister on March 22 reporting terms of Agreement signed at Berlin for cession of Memelland to Germany: records action taken in accordance with wish of Lithuanian Government that statement should be made by representatives of signatory Powers of Memel	533

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		Statute that in the circumstances prevailing Lithuanian Government had acted correctly towards them.	
555 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 373	Mar. 28	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché reporting information from General Gauché regarding war material captured by Germans in Czecho-Slovakia: records observations of Colonel Gauché regarding attitude of Soviet Union towards international situation.	535
556 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 392E	Mar. 28	Assesses in general terms advantages or otherwise which may be regarded as accruing to Germany in military and economic fields as result of their new territorial acquisition, and transmits memorandum by Commercial Counsellor respecting economic aspects of German Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia and Slovakia.	536
557 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 89	Mar. 29	Refers to No. 538 and reports that M. Beck will be leaving for London on April 2. Sir H. Kennard hopes that he may receive instructions to approach him as soon as possible as it would appear desirable that he should be able to consult his Government before departure.	539
558 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 136	Mar. 29	Refers to No. 538 and reports that French Government agree to proposed action.	540
559 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 60 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 69	Mar. 29	Refers to No. 538 and transmits amendment to paragraph 4 (d).	540
560 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 199	Mar. 29	Summarizes comment in 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz' on alleged anti-German incidents in Poland.	540
561 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 61 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 70	Mar. 29	Instructions to take action on No. 538.	541 X
562 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 86	Mar. 29	Refers to No. 538 and discusses conclusions which signature of Roumanian-German Trade Agreement suggests.	542
563 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 62	Mar. 29	Refers to No. 561 and inquires whether it might be a good thing to make communication to President or Marshal as well as M. Beck.	543
564 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 91	Mar. 29	Reports reply of Vice-M.F.A. to question whether Germany had made following three demands on Poland (i) Change in status of Danzig, (ii) Motor road across Corridor, (iii) Adherence to Anti-Comintern Pact.	543

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
565	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 46	Mar. 29	Records answer given to Soviet Ambassador when he inquired meaning of Prime Minister's statement in House on March 28: M. Maisky informed that H.M.G. were contemplating possibility of giving assurances, together with French Government, of military assistance to Poland and Roumania if these countries were attacked. ✓	544
566	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 114	Mar. 30	States that Question is being asked in House of Commons suggesting that German attack on Poland is imminent and asking what action H.M.G. would take in such a case: transmits text of answer which, if French Government agree, it is proposed to make: instructions to ascertain French views urgently.	545
567	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 88	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 561 and reports that action is being deferred in case Secretary of State may wish to modify instructions: French Minister agrees.	546
568	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 66	Mar. 30	States that Question is being asked in House of Commons suggesting that attack on Poland is imminent and asking what action H.M.G. would take in such a case: transmits text of reply, which subject to concurrence of French Government, it is proposed to make and requests obtain views of Polish Government urgently.	546
569	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. Unnumbered	Mar. 30	States that account of latest developments in regard to British guarantee for Poland is being despatched for personal information and guidance, and to provide background for any conversation with M.F.A. or Signor Mussolini.	547
570	To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 77	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 567: instructions to take action without delay.	547
571	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 68 To SIR G. OGILVIE- FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 97	Mar. 30.	Records message from U.S. Ambassador, Warsaw, that Herr von Ribbentrop is now pressing for immediate action against Poland: asks for comments.	547
572	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 204	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 564 and reports conversation with Polish Ambassador who gave no indication whatever that Germany was making demands or was being truculent.	548
573	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 94	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 568 and reports agreement of M. Beck to proposed answer to Question in House: suggests insertion of word 'unprovoked' before words 'action were taken' in proposed reply: reports assurance from German Ambassador and M. Beck that German Government have made no demands in nature of ultimatum and that there is no indication that they intend to	548

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
			take more menacing attitude in immediate future.	
574	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 138	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 566 and reports agreement of French Government to proposed reply: they do not apprehend any immediate <i>coup</i> against Poland.	549
575	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 93	Mar. 30	Refers to No. 538 and reports action taken: M. Beck stated he would submit proposals to President and Marshal Smigly-Rydz: records M. Beck's remarks regarding Hungary and whether any such proposal might not throw her definitely into German arms.	549
576	MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 10 Saving to Riga Tel. No. 23 to F.O.	Mar. 30	Reports that Seimas unanimously approved Government's conduct in concluding Lithuanian-German Treaty of March 22: formal Presidential ratification will doubtless follow.	550
577	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 95	Mar. 31	Refers to No. 571 and reports source of U.S. Ambassador's information.	550
578	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 97	Mar. 31	Refers to No. 575 and reports that French Ambassador has communicated proposals to Marshal Smigly-Rydz: Marshal's first reaction seemed to be one of satisfaction.	550
579	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 96	Mar. 31	Reports information that within last few days Vice-M.F.A. told Roumanian Ambassador (i) that Germany had warned Poland that she would regard as <i>casus belli</i> any movement of Polish troops into Free City of Danzig, (ii) that Poland had replied that she would equally regard as <i>casus belli</i> declaration by Danzig Senate of union with Germany.	551
580	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 206	Mar. 31	Transmits comments on No. 571 and states that while he has no confirmation that Herr von Ribbentrop is pressing for immediate action against Poland, it would not be surprising were it so.	551
581	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 143	Mar. 31	Transmits personal message from Prime Minister for Signor Mussolini informing him of statement that he is to make in House of Commons on March 31 declaring H.M.G.'s intention to lend Poland all support in their power should Poland be faced with action which clearly threatened her independence.	551
582	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 115 TO SIR M. LAMPSON Cairo Tel. No. 252	Mar. 31	Transmits text of statement which Prime Minister is making in House of Commons on March 31 regarding guarantee to Poland.	552
583	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 79	Mar. 31	Instructions to explain to Roumanian Government reasons for interim action taken by H.M.G. regarding Poland and to assure Roumanian Government that H.M.G. are resolved to continue with scheme set out in No. 538.	553

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
584	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 70	Mar. 31	Refers to No. 573 and explains why it was decided not to insert word 'unprovoked' into text of statement in House: instructions to impress upon M. Beck necessity for particular care on behalf of Polish Government to avoid provocative attitude and to keep in touch with H.M.G. M. Beck's attention should be drawn to fact that declaration is an interim measure pending conclusion of consultations now in progress with Poland and Roumania.	554
585	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 239	Mar. 31	Refers to No. 581 and reports action taken.	554
586	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 156	Mar. 31	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador who stated that President thought that Prime Minister's statement in House had been excellent and would have very great effect.	555
587	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 91	Mar. 31	Reports views of M.F.A. on scheme outlined in No. 538: Minister's first reaction was that it was sound but had been seriously compromised by publicity.	555
588	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 242	Mar. 31	Reports information from Count Ciano that Signor Mussolini was going to reply very shortly to Mr. Chamberlain's letter (No. 448).	556 ✓
589	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 232	Mar. 31	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador who was informed of statement which Prime Minister was to make in House regarding guarantee to Poland.	556
590	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 140	Mar. 31	Records conversation with Turkish Ambassador who was informed of arrangement which H.M.G. were trying to bring about with Polish and Roumanian Governments in endeavour to resist further German aggression. M. Aras then developed two ideas which he said were entirely his own and was told that they would be carefully examined.	558
591	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 136	Mar. 31	Refers to No. 254 and submits full report on occupation of Czecho-Slovakia by Germany.	560
592	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 392	Mar. 31	Refers to Nos. 537 and 558 and transmits copy of memorandum from Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that French Government are in agreement with action proposed and have sent instructions to their Representatives in Warsaw and Bucharest to act in concert with their British colleagues.	567
593	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 106	Mar. 31	Reports in detail visit to Moscow of Mr. Hudson, Secretary of Department of Overseas Trade, from March 23 to March 27 and transmits text of communiqué issued to press on March 27.	568

	NO. AND NAME.	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
594	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 214	Apr. 1	Reports reaction in Germany following Prime Minister's statement of guarantee for Poland: press and public awaiting Herr Hitler's speech at Wilhelmshaven on evening of April 1.	571
595	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 100	Apr. 1	Refers to No. 584 and reports action taken. M. Beck stated that although he had warned Polish press not to show too much extravagant enthusiasm for Prime Minister's declaration, this did not mean that Polish Government and people did not deeply appreciate it. M.F.A. confirmed information given in No. 579.	572
596	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 244	Apr. 1	Transmits translation of Signor Mussolini's reply of March 31 to Mr. Chamberlain's letter of March 20 (No. 448).	572
597	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 51	Apr. 1	Reports reaction of M. Litvinov to declaration in House by Prime Minister of guarantee to Poland: obvious that H.M.G.'s action is misunderstood and not appreciated.	574
598	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 74	Apr. 1	Records observations of Polish Ambassador regarding guarantee given to Poland: he feared that paragraph 2 of statement might be distorted so as to weaken position of Poland <i>vis-à-vis</i> Germany by encouraging Herr Hitler to demand negotiations and put forward maximum demands in regard to Danzig, the Corridor, and Silesia.	575
599	SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	Apr. 1	Minute recording conversation with Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires who was given a brief outline of H.M.G.'s scheme to guarantee Poland and Roumania.	576
600	TO SIR R. CLIVE Brussels	Apr. 1	Letter from Mr. Strang stating that H.M.G. have decided in principle in favour of holding Staff conversations with Dutch in due course, if Dutch are willing: conversations with French are now beginning but no decision has yet been taken about any approach to Dutch.	576
601	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 98	Apr. 2	Refers to No. 603 and submits what he believes to be real views of Roumanian Government which they are reluctant to express bluntly lest they do anything which might lead H.M.G. to recede from their present attitude of attempting to stem German aggression.	577
602	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 94	Apr. 2	Reports audience with King who inquired why Prime Minister's statement in House regarding Poland had not included assurance of support to Roumania: records King's comments regarding attitude of Poland, possible help from Soviet Russia, and attitude of Yugoslavia and Italy.	578
603	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 96	Apr. 2	Refers to No. 587 and transmits reply of Roumanian Government to Anglo-French proposals.	579

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
604	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 97	Apr. 2	Reports that Roumanian M.F.A. is to visit Berlin on April 18 and 19 and afterwards intends to go in private capacity to Brussels, London, Paris, and Milan.	580
605	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 102	Apr. 2	Reports that M. Beck left for London on April 2 and draws attention to certain points on which there should be a frank discussion with him during conversations in London.	581
606	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 223	Apr. 3	Reports information from reliable source that first sign of German intentions will be lightning attack on British fleet with object of delivering knock-out blow, and there will be neither an ultimatum nor a declaration of war: Herr Hitler alone will decide time for action.	582
607	To SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 643	Apr. 3	Transmits copy of Note from German Ambassador dated March 17 regarding establishment of Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: no reply has yet been returned to Note.	583
608	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 107	Apr. 3	Refers to No. 593 and reports two formal conversations between M. Litvinov and Mr. Hudson when international situation discussed.	584
609	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 412	Apr. 3	Refers to No. 117 and transmits copy of further memorandum by Air Attaché containing his views on strength and efficiency of German Air Force as a consequence of incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia in the Reich.	586

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CHAPTER I

The European situation: estimates of German intentions: the Danzig question: Herr Hitler's speech of January 30: the international guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia. (January 23–February 9, 1939.)

No. 1

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 17 Telegraphic [C 862/3/12]

PARIS, January 22, 1939, 8.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 16.¹

French Government agree to increase Anglo-French loan to £8,000,000 sterling.

They insist on necessity of obtaining assurances from Czecho-Slovak Government in regard to controlled use of sums granted to Prague Government whether under loan or as French and English gifts. 'The important point in fact is that use (destination) of funds should preserve, to the greatest possible extent, the humanitarian character which is the chief justification of operation in question.'

Copy of note by bag January 23.²

Repeated to Prague.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of January 20 Sir E. Phipps reported that he had urged M. Reynaud to withdraw his objections on financial grounds to an increase in the Anglo-French loan to Czecho-Slovakia.

² No. 3.

No. 2

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 24)*

No. 28 Saving: Telegraphic [C 921/19/18]

BERLIN, January 23, 1939

My telegram No. 28.¹

Field-Marshal Göring's paper, the 'National Zeitung', in comment on M. Chvalkovsky's flying visit to Berlin, writes that the visit had an informative character and that it on no account took place for the purpose of discussing or of paving the way for any new conceptions of foreign policy. The visit was rather an event in keeping with the framework of that policy of consolidation which Germany, as a Great Power of Europe, pursues within her narrow living space and especially within her own frontiers.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 554.

It has now been recognised, the paper continues, that there is no such thing for Czecho-Slovakia as a policy directed against Germany. It will be remembered that the new Czecho-Slovak Government had put this principle on their programme and that M. Chvalkovsky, during his first visit to Berlin, had told the Führer that he could be assured of loyal Czech co-operation with Germany. It may be taken for granted that the present meeting served to take stock of this new Czecho-Slovak policy. The 'National Zeitung' then continues as follows:—

'Prague cannot protest that failure to harmonise daily Czech realities with the Czech foreign political programme of friendship is a Czech domestic affair. Contrary to all commonsense, a section of the Czech press has adopted an unfriendly and occasionally even an arrogant tone towards Germany. There has also been increased evidence during the last few months in Prague of that anti-German Jewish propaganda which in reality is working against the Czecho-Slovak People and its Government and which appears to be living on the illusion that it can create difficulties for the German Reich.

'A review of the past year cannot fail to make clear to all concerned, how simple-minded such an illusion is and how badly Czecho-Slovakia, and Czecho-Slovakia alone, is hurt by anti-German propaganda and press campaigns. We must also hope that the few Benes adherents still in office will not decide the policy of the Czecho-Slovakia of today.

'The visit of M. Chvalkovsky will also have provided an opportunity for discussing the possibilities for intensifying economic relations between the Sudeten areas and the Czech border territories. As the complete settlement of these economic and political frontier problems is one of the most urgent tasks confronting the Prague Government, it may be taken for granted that the Czech Foreign Minister was also urged to make the necessary contribution towards the appeasement of Czech-Hungarian relations'.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 3

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 24)

No. 95 [C 928/3/12]

PARIS, January 23, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated January 22, regarding the loan to Czecho-Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 3

PARIS, le 22 janvier, 1939

L'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne à Paris a bien voulu faire tenir au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères la copie d'un mémorandum¹ remis le

¹ See Volume III of this Series, Appendix IV, document xvi.

17 janvier à l'Ambassade de France à Londres et qui a trait à l'aide financière à accorder au Gouvernement tchécoslovaque.

Dans ce document sont développées les raisons pour lesquelles le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté estime nécessaire que soit fixé à 8 millions de Livres sterling le montant de l'emprunt franco-anglais à émettre sur le marché de Londres.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l'honneur de faire savoir à l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté que, tenant compte de ces raisons, le Gouvernement français accepte de voir accroître dans ces limites les charges que les Gouvernements français et britannique ont décidé d'assumer.

Le Gouvernement français désire insister à cette occasion sur la nécessité d'obtenir du Gouvernement tchécoslovaque des assurances quant à l'emploi contrôlé des sommes accordées au Gouvernement de Prague, soit au titre de l'emprunt, soit au titre des dons français et anglais. Il importe en effet que, dans la plus large mesure, la destination des fonds conserve le caractère humanitaire qui est la justification principale de l'opération dont il s'agit.

No. 4

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 24, 12.10 p.m.)

No. 33 Telegraphic [C 917/19/18]

BERLIN, January 24, 1939, 11.49 a.m.

My telegram No. 28,¹ last sentence.

My Czech colleague informs me that he was not present at the interview with Herr von Ribbentrop and that M. Chvalkovsky did not tell him what passed.

Interview with Herr Hitler lasted about forty minutes, during which the latter spoke for thirty minutes on end. M. Chvalkovsky expressed desire of Czecho-Slovak Government to live in good neighbourly relations with Germany which Herr Hitler reciprocated, coupled with a profession of non-intervention in Czech internal affairs. The rest of the conversation was a diatribe against the Jews, who, he asserted, were the root cause of all the present troubles of Europe. He warned Czecho-Slovak Government against the Jews, urging their expulsion. Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, according to M. Mastny, replied that Czecho-Slovakia, not being a Great Power, could not adopt the German method. No mention was made of anti-Comintern Pact or of Communist danger or of any of the subjects of negotiation between German and Czecho-Slovak Governments. The tenor of the conversation left M. Mastny with the impression that Herr Hitler was not fully confident of the ability of the present Czecho-Slovak Government to eliminate anti-Nazi and Jewish elements from the country.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 554. In the last sentence of this telegram Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes reported that M. Mastny had promised to inform him of the nature of the discussions between Herr von Ribbentrop and M. Chvalkovsky.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Mallet (Washington)**No. 37 Telegraphic [C 939/15/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 24, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Please communicate following to the State Department for the personal and secret information of the President.

2. I have received a large number of reports from various reliable sources which throw a most disquieting light on Hitler's mood and intentions. According to these reports Hitler is bitterly resentful at the Munich Agreement which baulked him of a localised war against Czecho-Slovakia and demonstrated the will to peace of the German masses in opposition to the war-mongering of the Nazi Party. He feels personally humiliated by this demonstration. He regards Great Britain as primarily responsible for this humiliation and his rage is therefore directed principally against this country which he holds to be the chief obstacle now to the fulfilment of his further ambitions.

3. As early as November there were indications which gradually became more definite that Hitler was planning a further foreign adventure for the spring of 1939. At first it appeared—and this was confirmed by persons in Hitler's entourage—that he was thinking of expansion in the East and in December the prospect of establishing an independent Ukraine under German vassalage was freely spoken of in Germany.

4. Since then reports indicate that Hitler, encouraged by Ribbentrop, Himmler and others, is considering an attack on the Western Powers as a preliminary to subsequent action in the East. Some of these reports emanate from highly placed Germans of undoubted sincerity who are anxious to prevent this crime; others come from foreigners, hitherto Germanophil, who are in close touch with leading German personalities. They have received some confirmation in the reassurance which Hitler appears to have given to M. Beck¹ concerning his plans in the East, as well as in the support which Germany has recently given to Italy's claims against France.

5. There is as yet no reason to suppose that Hitler has made up his mind on any particular plan. Our reports show that he may:

(i) Push Italy to advance her claims by force and use his obligations to Italy as a pretext for embarking on war. This course would have the advantage of ensuring the participation of Italy from the outset.

(ii) Begin by launching an attack on Holland. The President will have noticed the recent deterioration of German-Dutch relations and the critical tone adopted towards Holland by the German press. Once in command of Holland and the Dutch coast, Germany would aspire to dictate terms to us and paralyse France. She might at the same time bribe Poland and perhaps other countries with promises of colonial loot; in that event the Dutch East Indies might be allocated to Japan.

¹ On January 5. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter IX.

(iii) Put forward impossible colonial demands in his speech of January 30 in the form of an ultimatum. This seems the least likely hypothesis.

(iv) Make a sudden air attack without pretext on England and follow up this initial surprise by land and sea operations against the Western Powers. We have received definite information from a highly placed German that preparations for such a *coup* are now being made. He has, however, no information to show that Hitler has yet made up his mind to execute this plan.

6. In the last few days we have received reliable information to the effect that the German Government are pressing for the conversion of the anti-Comintern Pact into a Pact pledging the signatories to give each other military assistance against unprovoked attack by a third Power: that the Italian Government have agreed, and that the Japanese Government are considering the matter.² Our information is that the German Government wish this Pact to be concluded in time for it to be announced by Herr Hitler in the speech he is expected to make on January 30.

7. All the reports are agreed in forecasting that the danger period will begin towards the end of February. This is borne out by independent reports to the effect that orders have been issued for mobilisation about the middle of February. We have already received news of preliminary mobilisation measures and the formation of a reserve regiment composed of time-expired conscripts has been recently established in Bavaria. Moreover the economic and financial crisis with which Germany is now faced might well compel Hitler to take some action, and the choice before him is either to slow down his rearmament and to abandon his policy of expansion, or else to launch into some foreign adventure in the hope that it will both distract attention from domestic difficulties and supply him with the material resources which the country urgently requires and can no longer buy abroad. There can be little doubt that a man of Hitler's temperament may be tempted to choose the second alternative. Another motive for his doing so might be that he was not sure of the loyalty of his army, and might feel that the surest way for a dictator to deal with a doubtful army was to give it occupation.

8. It may seem fanciful and even fantastic to attribute such designs to Hitler and it is as yet impossible to speak of them with certainty. His Majesty's Government have no wish to be alarmist, but today, as in July, August and September of last year, it is remarkable that there is one general tendency running through all the reports, and it is impossible to ignore them, particularly in view of the character and proved reliability of many of the informants. Moreover, Hitler's mental condition, his insensate rage against Great Britain and his megalomania, which are alarming the moderates around him, are entirely consistent with the execution of a desperate *coup* against the Western Powers. The removal of moderates such as Schacht³

² Documents relating to the Anti-Comintern Pact will be printed in later volumes of this Series.

³ Dr. Schacht was relieved of his office as President of the Reichsbank on January 20. He was succeeded by Dr. Funk.

and Wiedemann⁴ is symptomatic. It has been suggested in some quarters that the German people would not follow Hitler on such a course and that a revolt would ensue. We have examined this aspect, but the authorities on Germany whom we have consulted including anti-Nazi Germans of sound judgment are agreed that Hitler's orders would be carried out and that no revolt can be anticipated at all events during the initial stages of a war.

9. His Majesty's Government have carefully considered the situation in the light of these reports and have decided to accelerate as far as possible the preparation of their defensive and counter-offensive measures. In the meantime they are employing such methods as are available to them for bringing home to the German people the wantonness and folly of embarking on aggressive military adventures. They will lay such public emphasis as they can on the point, in the hope of deterring Herr Hitler from committing himself to something irrevocable in the speech which he is expected to make on January 30.

10. Finally, in the event of Germany picking a quarrel with Holland, His Majesty's Government are considering the desirability as a matter of tactics and precaution of being ready at once with a proposal to both Governments for the selection by neutral Governments of a board of three arbitrators. Such a proposal might not prove effective, but if arbitration were rejected or over-ridden by Germany, the issue would be clear and His Majesty's Government would have *locus standi* for appropriate action.

11. In the next few days His Majesty's Government will be considering carefully what further steps they might take to avert or to meet a situation such as they have cause to apprehend, and I will of course keep the President informed of any decision taken.

12. In view of the relations of confidence which exist between our two Governments and the degree to which we have exchanged information hitherto, His Majesty's Government feel bound to state frankly their apprehensions as to the future and to indicate what measures they feel able to take. It would of course be a great help to them if the President had any further suggestions to make.

13. It is impossible as yet for the Prime Minister to decide whether he will himself utter any public warning to Germany before Hitler makes his speech on January 30. The Prime Minister is due to speak at Birmingham on January 28, and, if possible, I would let the President know beforehand what line the Prime Minister would propose to take. If the President were disposed to take an occasion for any public announcement, it might be the more valuable if he were to do so before January 30.

⁴ Captain Wiedemann had been appointed German Consul-General at San Francisco.

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 28)

No. 37 [C 1071/19/18]

PRAGUE, January 24, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that I visited the private secretary of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day to enquire whether he could give me any information regarding Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit to Berlin.

2. Dr. Masarik, who had accompanied his chief on the visit, informed me that the German Government had shown an entirely correct and courteous attitude, and that the conversations had been conducted on both sides with frankness and loyalty. The larger aspects of European policy had practically not been touched, and the discussions had been confined to three questions: (1) the political relations between the two countries; (2) the question of minorities; and (3) economic collaboration. I may mention that the word 'guarantee' was not mentioned either by Dr. Masarik or by myself throughout the conversation.

3. So far as Czecho-German political relations were concerned, Dr. Masarik stated that there was little to add to the article in the 'National-Zeitung', which is reported in Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes's *Savingram* No. 28¹ of the 23rd January. That, he said, was substantially correct, but he emphasised the pressure being exercised on the Czecho-Slovak Government in connexion with the Jewish problem. I am reporting his remarks on that problem in a separate despatch.²

4. With regard to the minorities question, Dr. Masarik stated that it was evidently the established policy of the German Government to use a German minority in any country for political ends. Czecho-Slovakia, being now the weakest of all countries with which Germany had dealings and containing even within her reduced frontiers nearly 400,000 persons of German race, was peculiarly subject to pressure in this respect. He did not specify the particular demands to which the Czecho-Slovak Government were being subjected, but stated that the Mixed Minority Commission, the establishment of which had been arranged at the time of the agreement for the mutual protection of minorities in November last year, would now shortly begin work.

5. With regard to economic collaboration, he emphatically denied that there was any question of a customs union between the two countries, adding that statements to the contrary in the English press did nothing but ill service to Czecho-Slovakia. He continued that the German Government fully realised that a customs union with Czecho-Slovakia would only add to their liabilities and that for that reason they had no incentive to press for it. They were, on the other hand, pressing for a larger exchange of goods and were demanding, for example, increased deliveries of Czecho-Slovak steel. They

¹ No. 2.

² No. 7.

were also demanding that no new industries should be set up in Czecho-Slovakia which might compete with German industries.

6. He said that so many questions still remained to be settled between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia that there was no time during Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit to discuss them. Their negotiation would follow in due course under qualified negotiators. Meanwhile, the discussions of a definitive railway agreement, which had been taking place in Prague, would, he believed, shortly reach conclusion, and the new agreement would probably be signed in the next day or so.

7. I cannot say that I found Dr. Masarik in buoyant spirits. Indeed, rather the contrary. He opened the conversation by saying that it was impossible to conceive the difficulties of conducting the foreign policy of his country in present conditions. That may well be believed. With regard to Czecho-Slovakia's other neighbours, he said that relations with Hungary appeared to be easier than those with Poland. He thought that Count Czaky was working for general appeasement, a cause which had Czecho-Slovakia's full support.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Berlin and Warsaw and to His Majesty's Minister in Budapest.

I have, &c.,

J. M. TROUTBECK

No. 7

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 28)

No. 38 [C 1085/3/12]

PRAGUE, January 24, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that according to to-day's 'Prager Tagblatt' further steps are shortly to be taken to solve the Jewish problem. The Juridical Committee of Ministers, it is stated, has already prepared proposals to this end, and the Economic Committee is now examining the matter from every other point of view.

2. In conversation to-day with the Private Secretary of the Minister for Foreign Affairs I was informed that the solution of the question was being pursued under three aspects. In the first place the Czecho-Slovak Government were resolved to 'liquidate' the émigrés. They had no intention of proceeding to harsh measures for this purpose, but were nevertheless determined to carry it out. I enquired what categories were included under the term 'émigré' and received the reply that it included not only Reich-Germans and Austrians but also Sudeten-German Jews who had recently fled from their homes. I reminded Dr. Masarik of the anxiety felt lest such persons should be sent back to Germany and he repeated the assurance that the Czecho-Slovak Government had no such intention. They were actively engaged in trying to find homes for them elsewhere.

3. Secondly he stated that the Czecho-Slovak Government were engaged in revising their nationality legislation with a view to depriving of Czecho-Slovak nationality certain undesirables who had succeeded in acquiring it. He thought that the number of such persons would not be great.

4. Finally, the Government were considering legislation designed to restrict Jews and others in the exercise of professions according to their numerical proportion in the State. If I understood him aright, this legislation will not be retroactive and will not apply to old-established Czech Jews. Even so the contemplated legislation seems hardly compatible with the assurances reported in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 4¹ of the 3rd January.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,

J. M. TROUTBECK

P.S. I should be grateful if the source of the foregoing statements could be kept strictly confidential, as otherwise Dr. Masarik may prove less forthcoming in the information he supplies to this Legation.

J. M. T.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported an assurance from the Czecho-Slovak Government that there was no truth in the British and German press reports that legislation on the lines mentioned in paragraph 4 above was under consideration.

No. 8

*Mr. Mallet (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 39a Telegraphic [C 989/15/18]

WASHINGTON, January 25, 1939, 5.37 p.m.

Your telegram No. 37.¹

Message delivered this afternoon to Under-Secretary of State who said that similar message received through United States Embassy this morning was already being considered by the President.

¹ No. 5.

No. 9

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 26)

No. 31 Saving: Telegraphic [C 983/15/18]

PARIS, January 25, 1939

I called this morning upon my German colleague in order to return a visit that he paid me some time ago. He has only recently returned from Germany, and the following is the gist of what he told me.

Goebbels had been the chief person responsible for the persecution of the

Jews. Even Himmler had been opposed to this. Count Welczeck said he had heard this from several well-informed sources in Germany. He had no reason to wish to clear Himmler, whom he had never even met.

The dismissal of Dr. Schacht seemed to be taken too tragically abroad: it did not necessarily imply any intention on the part of Herr Hitler to change his general foreign policy. Moreover Dr. Funk was a perfectly sound and sensible man, whom he knew very well as he had stayed at the German Embassy for a fortnight last year during the Exhibition.¹ Dr. Funk was, as I knew, a loyal worker under Göring, who, himself, was still to be reckoned among the moderates: he had changed very much from the Göring I had known at Berlin: his wife and child had mellowed him considerably. His Excellency did not know whether the press reports were true regarding the approaching assumption by Göring of the Chancellorship. If they were true it would be all to the good.

Count Welczeck would not admit that the recent slumps on the various Bourses were fully justified. He declared that, whilst last summer he had been a pessimist and had believed war to be likely, he now felt optimistic and failed to see any reason for it. There was, of course, a rather general fear that the Italians and Germans might try to remain in Spain after the war was ended, either for the purpose of bargaining or of obtaining territorial concessions. Quite apart from the definite assurances that had been given on these points by Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler this view could only be held by persons completely ignorant of the Spanish character (Count Welczeck was over ten years at Madrid before coming here). Once the war was over the one idea of all Spaniards would be to get rid of all foreigners. But there was one thing the Spaniards would want from foreigners and that was capital to repair their house and set it in order again. Germany and Italy certainly had no capital to lend, and Count Welczeck seemed to indicate with a smile that if we and the French were adroit we should have an excellent chance of playing considerable parts in post-war Spain.

I remarked that, as Count Welczeck would have noticed in the press, what caused the French great preoccupation was how far Herr Hitler supported Italian claims against France. The Ambassador said that the Führer could not be expected to disavow those claims, but he thought, contrary to the opinion generally expressed, that the claims would probably be reduced after Franco's complete victory, which, in itself, would add to Signor Mussolini's prestige and soothe him by enabling him to bring his costly and unpopular intervention in Spain to an end. If, after that, and once a better atmosphere had been created between France and Italy, conversations could begin between the two countries with a view to some reasonable French concessions being made by France over Djibuti, for instance, (free port and preferential rates over the railway), there would be a good chance of a definite improvement in Franco-Italian relations. The Ambassador did not mention the Suez Canal.

¹ The reference is presumably to the Paris International Exhibition of 1937.

No. 10

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 45 [C 979/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 25, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Polish Ambassador to come and see me this morning, and gave him a brief report of what had passed at Geneva in relation to the Danzig question and the Committee of Three.¹ His Excellency was generally familiar with the situation through the reports of M. Komarnicki, the Polish representative at Geneva.

2. I said that I anticipated it would be necessary to have a further meeting of the Committee of Three before the next meeting of the Council, and I thought that it might be of great value if, before such a meeting was held, it had been possible for me to have a personal conversation with Colonel Beck on the question. While I anticipated that the Committee of Three would find it very difficult to avoid taking some action in regard to the present position at Danzig, we had done our best, as Count Raczynski would have appreciated, to have regard to what we had understood to be the general Polish desires in the matter in what had passed at Geneva, and we were not less anxious now to work in harmony with Poland in regard to further developments.

3. The Ambassador replied that, as I would be aware, the suggestion of a possible visit of Colonel Beck to London had been suggested, though not perhaps in very definite form, by Colonel Beck to Your Excellency in a recent interview at Warsaw, and he would certainly at once transmit to Colonel Beck what I had said. He thought himself that the suggestion might be usefully taken up.

4. Before leaving, the Ambassador referred to the recent conversation at Berchtesgaden between Colonel Beck and Herr Hitler,² and said that in regard to Danzig Colonel Beck had received very definite assurances from Herr Hitler that Germany had no intention of confronting Poland with any *fait accompli*, and had given the general impression that Germany was not contemplating adventures anywhere.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See Volume III of this Series, Chapter IX.

² On January 5. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter IX.

Letter from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Mr. Strang

[C 1089/16/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *January 25, 1939*

We have felt that during the last two weeks there has been a considerable diminution of outspoken criticism in the German press against us and that the press on the whole have been fairly reasonable. Palestine of course is still an exception, but we hope that after the recent visit to Berlin of Tweedy, the Palestine Government's press representative, and his conversations with the 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' authorities at the latter's invitation, there may be some amelioration in the situation in this sphere as well. As you know, the 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' have been responsible for the circulation in the German press of the outrageous reports about the behaviour of our troops in Palestine. Further undue prominence may possibly have been given in the last few days to the unemployment demonstrations in London and the recent bomb explosions,¹ but there has been no insidious or tendentious comment. Disagreeable allusions to Eden etc. except in the comic papers seem to have been relegated to a secondary position. The absence of press criticism against ourselves may of course only constitute a lull and full force of the press attacks may, as in the past, be turned on us again at short notice on the lines adopted *vis-à-vis* other countries. Possibly other political events may have had better news value; on the other hand it is possible that our recent unofficial talks with the responsible officials at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Propaganda may be bearing a little fruit, and we feel that in these circumstances, without wishing to be in any way optimistic, we should not allow this lull to pass without a move on our part. If we could make some favourable comment, we are sure that such action would be appreciated here. It seems hopeless to take the line in this connexion that the situation may not be ripe. In our opinion we must grasp at every opportunity, however slender and fragile it may be, if we are to have any success at all in putting an end to, or at least in decreasing the force of, these poisonous press polemics which are a source of such perpetual embarrassment to Anglo-German relations.

In the circumstances we suggest

(a) that it might be worth while giving some discreet indication to the more responsible representatives of the British press that it is in our interests to damp down as far as possible unnecessary press criticism of Germany.

(b) that, when the Prime Minister makes his speech on foreign affairs after Parliament meets at the end of the month, he might take the opportunity of making some friendly reference to the improvement in the German press attitude towards Great Britain and of expressing the hope that this state of affairs, which of course needs parallel action in the two countries, may continue still further in the interests of general appeasement.

¹ A number of bomb explosions had recently taken place in England. They were attributed to the Irish Republican Army.

If, of course, in the meantime the attitude of the German press or Government deteriorates, or Hitler or some member of the Administration attacks us, we quite agree that our proposals fall to the ground straight away. Would you let us know as soon as possible your reactions to our suggestions, as such an expression of view would be helpful to our Press Attaché in dealing with the press authorities here and British and German newspaper correspondents?²

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

² Mr. Kirkpatrick replied by letter on February 16 that, with regard to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes' first suggestion, the News Department had recently been at pains to point out to correspondents the improved tone of the German press, but, as to the second suggestion, the Foreign Office felt they could hardly recommend that the Prime Minister or any other Government spokesman should express appreciation until it was clear that instructions had been given to the German press to adopt a better tone, and that the improvement in the press relations between the two countries was likely to be lasting.

No. 12

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 12.5 p.m.)

No. 18 Telegraphic [C 1002/3/12]

PRAGUE, January 26, 1939, 11.5 a.m.

My despatch No. 38.¹

I informed Dr. Masarik last night that I feared information he had given me regarding Czecho-Slovak Government's intentions in respect of limiting professional . . .² of Jews might have unpleasant repercussions on loan negotiations more particularly in view of assurances contained in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 4.³

He replied he had since our talk made further enquiries and discovered that this point had been dropped out of proposed programme which was now limited to liquidating émigrés and revising nationality. . . .⁴ He added that these latter measures would not be designed specifically against the Jews.

I am inclined to doubt whether introduction of *numerus clausus* is more than postponed but I gather from your telegram No. 559⁵ that its postponement is your chief preoccupation. Dr. Pospisil's reaction to draft letter contained in your despatch No. 835⁶ may provide some clearer indication of possible subsequent intentions though it must be remembered that Czechs are past masters in legal quibbling and may well argue that if any measures such as the *numerus clausus* are applied to all races in the country there will be discrimination against none.

¹ No. 7.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ Not printed. See No. 7, note 1.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

⁵ Not printed.

⁶ Not printed. In this draft letter the Czecho-Slovak Government were required to give an assurance that there would be 'no discrimination in any part of Czecho-Slovakia against any person' (including refugees) 'on account of his religious beliefs, political opinions or racial origin'.

No. 13

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 1.0 p.m.)

No. 10 Telegraphic [N 453/411/38]

MOSCOW, January 26, 1939, 1.47 p.m.

During my first visit to him yesterday M. Litvinov informed me that a German trade delegation was shortly coming to Moscow for the purpose of negotiating an agreement. In this connexion please see Mr. Vereker's letter of January 14¹ to Mr. Collier sent by last bag. I am endeavouring to obtain further details and will keep you informed.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ Not printed.

No. 14

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Troutbeck (Prague)

No. 8 Telegraphic [C 928/3/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 26, 1939, 5.30 p.m.

In connexion with the agreements concerning financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia which are expected to be signed tomorrow, you should receive tomorrow a letter signed by the Governor of the National Bank and the Finance Minister. The text of this letter, which is not for publication, is contained in my immediately following telegram.¹

¹ No. 15.

No. 15

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Troutbeck (Prague)

No. 9 Telegraphic [C 928/3/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 26, 1939, 6.10 p.m.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

Begins: 'With reference to Annex IV of the letter² addressed to Lord Halifax by Dr. Pospisil at the time of the signature of the agreements for financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia, and, in accordance with the Minister of Finance of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, we have the honour to confirm to you that the gift of £4,000,000, which the Government of the United Kingdom is granting to the Government of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, is to be kept with the Bank of England on a Special Account opened in our name.

'In accordance with the Agreement between the two Governments, this gift will be used for the assistance of refugees and we will dispose of any

¹ No. 14.

² Printed in Cmd. 5933 of 1939, pp. 10-15.

amounts from this Account only in accordance with the joint request of the Refugee Institute and the British Liaison Officer (or in his absence the Commercial Secretary of the British Legation in Prague).

'We confirm further that the limitation of the disposal of this Account in favour of the Refugee Institute and the British Liaison Officer as mentioned in the previous paragraph is irrevocable.' Ends.

No. 16

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 10 Telegraphic [N 461/411/38]

WARSAW, January 26, 1939, 8.13 p.m.

Your telegram No. 7.¹

I learn from Ministry of Foreign Affairs that German delegation headed by Herr Schnurre will pass through Warsaw in the next few days *en route* for Moscow. Poland's attitude seems that this development is welcome politically though economically it may hamper their own trade discussions with U.S.S.R. as they and Germany wish to take the same Russian exports e.g. hides, asbestos and manganese.

Polish estimate of total trade possible between themselves and U.S.S.R. is 80 million zloté each way.

I gather that the Ministry of Finance attach some importance to Polish-Soviet negotiations as they hope they may relieve the currency situation and assist textile and heavy industry here.

Repeated to Berlin and Moscow.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir H. Kennard was asked whether he could confirm the report of the departure for Moscow of a German trade delegation.

No. 17

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 9 Telegraphic [C 1026/54/18]

WARSAW, January 26, 1939, 8.14 p.m.

My telegram No. 6.¹

The German Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived here on January 25 for a stay of two days.

In a speech to members of the German Colony, Herr von Ribbentrop declared *inter alia* as reported in the press that Polish-German agreement of January 1934 had put a definite end to unfriendliness between the two nations.

Official press further reports that, at a banquet at the Ministry of Foreign

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 537.

Affairs yesterday evening attended by the German Ambassador and prominent Polish personalities, M. Beck made a speech of welcome in cordial terms referring to simplicity and efficacy of Polish-German declaration of friendship signed exactly five years ago which would continue to form the basis of Polish-German relations. Any problems that arose would, he hoped, be treated in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. Herr von Ribbentrop is reported to have replied in closely similar terms and to have declared 'the strengthening and deepening of friendly relations with Poland constitutes a vital element of German foreign policy'.

I hope to report later any development of importance during the visit.
Repeated to Berlin.

No. 18

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Bland (The Hague)

No. 4 Telegraphic [C 1012/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 26, 1939, 9.15 p.m.*

Following from Cadogan:

1. As you know, there are all kinds of stories going about on the subject of Germany's possible future intentions, and some of these stories suggest that Germany may be contemplating an attack on the Western Powers. One of the suggestions is that there might be an invasion of Holland, the object being to occupy part or whole of the country, either as a base for operations against this country, or as a pledge on the basis of which demands would be made upon Great Britain and France.

2. We are keeping an open mind as to the credence to be attached to reports of this kind, though naturally the possibility that they may be well-founded is not one which we can afford to leave completely out of account.

3. From various reports we have had from you, and from conversations we have had here with the Netherlands Chargé d'Affaires, we gather that the Netherlands Government are not inclined to attach too great importance to stories about an imminent threat to the Netherlands.

4. We have been giving considerable thought to the question of what our attitude would be in the event of a German attack on the Netherlands, and a final decision is likely to be taken in the course of the next few days. This, however, is for your own personal information only at the present stage.

5. In the meantime the Secretary of State thinks it would be useful if you could begin to explore the situation tentatively with M. Colijn. What we should be glad to know, if you could discover it discreetly, would be what credence he attaches to the reports he has had from . . .¹ and other sources; and what would be the attitude of the Netherlands Government and the disposition of the Dutch people in the event of the German threat materialising. We should also like to have your own personal appreciation on these latter points.

¹ A name is here omitted.

6. We realise that your approach, however discreetly managed, may lead M. Colijn to ask what the attitude of His Majesty's Government would be in the event of a German attack, but as I have said, we are not yet in a position to give you definite guidance on this subject, though you should say nothing to suggest that this contingency would leave us indifferent.

7. We hope that you will find an early opportunity to approach M. Colijn, or failing him, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Please report the result by telegram.

No. 19

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 17 Telegraphic [C 659/17/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 26, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

My telegram to Paris No. 447.¹

1. During conversations which Prime Minister and I had in Paris on January 10 with French Ministers² latter indicated that they would like a joint guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia by the four Munich Powers. This would only come into play if three of the four guaranteeing Powers were in agreement. The inconvenient and indeed dangerous situation now obtaining would then come to an end. At present Great Britain and France were bound by their guarantees of Czecho-Slovakia, while Germany and Italy were quite free. It was agreed that the Prime Minister and I would raise this question in Rome and that it would also be raised in Berlin by the French and British representatives. M. Léger thought it would be well to clear away certain German doubts and suspicions in this matter and to point out to the German Government that a guarantee such as was now suggested would not in any way be directed against them. M. Bonnet remarked in this connexion that Herr von Ribbentrop in Paris had shown great reserve in this matter of a guarantee and had objected that Czecho-Slovakia might some day be hostile again to Germany and might even be governed by 'another Benes'.

2. Question was discussed with Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano at Rome on January 12.³ Signor Mussolini's general view was that before a guarantee could be considered three questions must be settled, namely (1) the internal constitution of Czecho-Slovakia itself, (2) the establishment of her neutrality, and (3) the demarcation of her frontiers on the ground, for hitherto they had only been shown on maps. When these conditions were fulfilled he thought a guarantee might be considered, but in the meantime, owing to the actions of Germany and Italy, it was considered that Central Europe would remain quiet.

3. You should now concert with your French colleague and enquire the attitude of the German Government informing them of the line taken by Signor Mussolini as recorded in paragraph 2 above. Paragraph 1 above is for

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 439.

² Ibid. No. 496.

³ Ibid. No. 500, Section (3).

your own information and not for communication to the German Government.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Moscow, Bucharest, Budapest, and Belgrade.

No. 20

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 37 Telegraphic [C 1009/15/18]

BERLIN, January 26, 1939, 11.16 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

My despatch No. 113.¹

Following information was communicated to me confidentially this evening by Mr. Conwell-Evans.² Although sensational, I send it with all reserve.

He tells me that he has it from Party sources, which have hitherto never failed him, that Herr Hitler intends in the month of March, in the event of Italy not receiving satisfaction from France, to break out westwards and to turn the Maginot Line through the Low Countries and through Switzerland. Herr Hitler is relying on our lack of preparedness for a major war this year and he also hopes to wrest colonies back through his hold on the Netherlands and Switzerland. The principal object of Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw is to square the Poles. He adds that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are in complete ignorance of what is afoot, these matters being handled by Herr von Ribbentrop's personal staff.

In view of his association with Anglo-German Fellowship Conwell-Evans has intimate contacts and receives confidences from Nazi leaders which are denied to us officials.

¹ No. 23.

² Mr. T. P. Conwell-Evans was Joint Honorary Secretary of the Anglo-German Fellowship.

No. 21

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 26 Saving: Telegraphic [C 659/17/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 26, 1939

My telegram to Berlin No. 17.¹

You should inform French Government of view expressed by Signor Mussolini as recorded in paragraph 2.

Repeated to Rome and Berlin.

¹ No. 19.

No. 22

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27)

No. 110 [C 1046/13/18]

BERLIN, January 26, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that a decree was issued on the 19th January regarding the training of recruits both before and after their period of military service under the control of the S.A.

2. In this connexion I enclose herein in original an interesting despatch and an explanatory memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy, in which he draws attention to the criticism levelled by the National Socialist party at the Ex-Servicemen's Organisation, who are alleged to carry out inadequately their duty of providing the proper conditions for the welfare and military efficiency of their members, and whose orthodoxy has fallen under suspicion. In this connexion I would also refer to the instructions which have recently been issued to the Kyffhäuserbund regarding the attitude they are to adopt towards the ex-Kaiser on the occasion of his 80th birthday (my despatch No. 111¹ of the 26th January).

3. It has been suggested that the increased responsibility placed on the shoulders of the S.A. is due in no small measure to Herr Hitler's desire to use that body as a counterweight to the powerful S.S. organisation under Herr Himmler.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

¹ Not printed. This despatch reported that a circular letter had been sent by General Reinhardt, head of the Kyffhäuserbund, to all Regimental Associations that messages of congratulation to the ex-Kaiser on his 80th birthday were absolutely prohibited. A partial exception was made in the case of former Bodyguard Units.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN No. 22

Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes

No. 1

BERLIN, January 24, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to attach an explanation of the decree issued on the 19th January, by which the scope of pre-military and post-military training in Germany and the responsibility of the S.A. for its organisation are considerably increased.

I have the following comments to make:—

(a) The decree itself and most articles on the subject in the press emphasise the increased co-operation between the S.A. and the fighting services which will be achieved. Special mention is made of the fact that the decree owes much to the personal initiative of Generaloberst von Brauchitsch, Com-

mander-in-chief of the Army. This may or may not be true. It is at least very doubtful.

(b) Although the Commanders-in-chief of the Fighting Services will work in close co-operation with the Chief of Staff of the S.A. as regards methods of training, tests and standards for the new 'Wehrabzeichen,' the responsibility for carrying them out is vested entirely in the Chief of Staff of the S.A.

(c) Hitherto, there has been no compulsion regarding training for the 'Wehrabzeichen' badge. There is still no compulsion. But as the Führer has decreed that it is the moral duty of every German concerned to qualify for the badge, and as all responsibility in the matter is delegated to the party organisation in the form of the S.A., it is unlikely that anyone affected in the Reich will succeed in evading this 'moral duty'.

(d) As far as pre-military training is concerned the effect of the decree is to place every man liable to military service under the moral—tantamount really to actual—compulsion to qualify or attempt to qualify for the badge.

This compulsion extends to all men of the classes from 1900 to 1913 who have not yet served and become fully-fledged Reservists.

(e) The post-military effect of the decree is far more significant.

Although it would appear that men on leaving the colours will not be forced actually to enrol in the S.A., they will all be compelled to join their local 'Wehrmannschaft.' These 'Wehrmannschaften' will be composed of Reservists, and will form part of the S.A. organisation. They will be formed and officered by the S.A., and I am informed by the War Ministry that they will possibly wear a brown uniform of S.A. type.

Ostensibly the task of these 'Wehrmannschaften' will be to maintain the standard of physical fitness of men after discharge from the colours. They will be called out frequently for training in athletics of the 'Wehrsport' type, and will be required to requalify for their badges according to the standards laid down. In point of fact, however, the party will not content itself with the physical welfare of these 'Wehrmannschaften.' Advantage will be taken of the fact that these bodies are part of the party organisation to deal with the spiritual weal of their members, and the press openly states that much attention will be paid to the political education and to the 'Weltanschauung' generally of the men. This also has been admitted to me by the Attaché Gruppe.

It appears from my enquiries at the War Ministry that the 'Kyffhäuserbund', the National Ex-Servicemen's Organisation, is considered by the party to have failed in one of its main tasks, namely, the maintenance of the martial ardour and military enthusiasm of its members. It is held that it has been too prone to concern itself with effecting good relations with the ex-servicemen of countries in political opposition to Germany. The 'Peace on Earth' spirit in which meetings with foreign ex-servicemen are conducted is thought to be bad for morale. The Kyffhäuserbund has now been relieved of its responsibilities as regards keeping the flame of militarism alive. It will devote itself in future mainly to the maintenance of the traditions of former regiments, and to its widespread charitable tasks.

(f) As has been brought out by Herr Lutze, Chief of Staff of the S.A., in speeches at Goslar on the 15th instant, and at Düsseldorf on the 22nd, every effort is now being made to obtain the greatest possible measure of co-operation between the S.A. and the fighting services. The decree of the 19th goes a very long way in this direction. The main effects of the decree—namely, the Nazification of all Reservists and a decrease in the average girth of the middle-aged German—will not be apparent for some time. But the measures to give effect to this will ensure immediate and close co-operation between the Headquarters of the S.A. and of the Fighting Services, and a large number of non-party Germans will almost at once fall into the clutches of the party and will be forced to attend political instruction which they have hitherto been able to avoid.

It remains to be seen how the general public will react to this latest example of totalitarian compulsion. The distaste with which the army will regard this enforced closer co-operation with the party and the political education of its Reservists will probably be tempered to a certain extent by the purely military advantages of increased national fitness and militarism. (If, indeed, they accrue.)

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE,
Colonel, Military Attaché

ENCLOSURE 2 IN NO. 22

*Decree of January 19, 1939, regarding Pre-military and Post-military
'Wehrsport' Training*

The following is a brief explanation of the above decree:—

1. The badge for proficiency in sport, previously called the 'Sportabzeichen', is now termed the 'Wehrsportabzeichen'. There will be little or no change in the qualifications necessary to obtain the badge, as the basis of the tests has all along been 'Wehr' or 'military' sport.

2. It is now the 'moral duty' of every German on attaining his 18th birthday to qualify for this badge. Those affected are all persons liable for military service. This includes in the pre-military training category all men of the classes 1900 to 1913 who have not qualified as first-class Reservists.

3. In the post-military training category all men leaving the colours and going to the Reserve are included.

4. Responsibility for training men and for carrying out all tests in connexion with qualifying for the badge is vested in the Chief of Staff of the S.A.

5. The Chief of Staff of the S.A. will co-operate closely with the Headquarters of the Fighting Services as regards the standards to be attained and similar details, but all executive arrangements will be entirely in the hands of the S.A.

6. In the pre-military period all members of the Hitler Jugend will commence training for the badge on attaining their 17th birthday.

7. For the purpose of carrying out the necessary military athletic training,

and, above all, in order to maintain the standard of physical fitness in Reservists, the S.A. will form units which will be known as 'Wehrmannschaften.' Every Reservist on leaving the colours will have to join his local 'Wehrmannschaft,' unless he already belongs to the S.S., N.S.K.K., N.S.F.K., or similar party organisations.

These 'Wehrmannschaften' will form part of the S.A. organisation, but have no para-military significance as their personnel will not be armed.

No. 23

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 27)

No. 113 [C 1023/15/18]

BERLIN, January 26, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 1417¹ of the 29th December, I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a despatch from the Military Attaché giving a résumé of the military situation of Germany as it appears at present to be developing.

2. It will be observed from the Military Attaché's despatch, with which I am in general agreement, that the recent trend of events, especially the present rather more conciliatory attitude towards Poland, would seem to make active German intervention in the Ukraine unlikely in the near future, and that it is at present believed that the Germans are preparing some military concentration in an area in the south of the country which would be convenient for exerting pressure on the south-east of Europe or for supporting Italy, with regard to whom I have noticed that mutual consultation has been closer than ever. It is very likely that, until the Spanish situation clears up, Herr Hitler wishes the armed forces of Germany to be in a state of readiness to assist Italy at short notice.

3. The situation is obscure and the atmosphere generally uneasy. Herr Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on the 30th January may throw some light on his future intentions.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

ENCLOSURE IN No. 23

Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes

No. 2

BERLIN, January 24, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following brief résumé of the way in which the military situation in this country appears to be developing:—

Events have moved rapidly since my memorandum of the 26th December,¹ and, although the situation is still most obscure, one or two pointers are

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 505.

beginning to emerge. I give my opinions with due reserve, but they reflect generally those of the more responsible of my colleagues, and of other observers with whom I have been in contact:—

(a) There is a general impression that active German intervention in the Ukraine is now unlikely in the *near* future. It would appear that Germany is coming to some temporary understanding with Poland with the obviously possible object of leaving herself a freer hand elsewhere. The attitude of my Polish colleague is not inconsistent with this.

(b) There are indications of which I myself have obtained comparatively few, but which appear none the less to be fairly numerous and credible, that preparations are being made for some form of military concentration in South Germany and Austria. It is held in several quarters that the Germans intend to create a 'centre of force' in this area which will enable them the better to pursue their policy in South-East Europe, or, if need be, support Italy.

(c) Reservists have undoubtedly been called up in several areas. It is not yet clear what proportion of these can be explained by the calling up of men for normal short-term training. The latter has undoubtedly commenced, and in at least one case the men involved are all Sudeten who are being trained in Prussia.

(d) There are many reports from different sources of the movement of troops into Austria, and of military goods rail activity in this direction and also over the Brenner. These are all consistent with the possibility referred to in paragraph 5.

(e) The events of the past week, including the transfers of Dr. Schacht and of Captain Wiedemann, and the decree regarding the S.A.'s closer co-operation with the army over military sport, have gone far to alarm moderate opinion in the country. On the other hand, I have so far discovered nothing in either the attitude or the actions of German officers definitely portending immediate military activity on a large scale. There is no doubt whatever that the whole army is working at very high pressure. Minor signs that something is in the air are not wanting. There have recently been far fewer soldiers about in Berlin over the week-end. The chief of the Operations Section of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht has been unexpectedly ordered away on duty at the end of this week. Officers are refusing invitations, stating frankly that they are too over-worked to be able to go out in the evening. There is, however, as yet nothing definitely to confirm the reports that partial mobilisation is to commence next month, although, from the purely military point of view, only domestic military considerations indicate that it ought to be unlikely. Information regarding the very indifferent condition of the railway system as a whole keeps coming in.

(f) It is possible that matters may clarify somewhat by the end of the month, and, should there be a Führer speech on the 30th, it may give an idea as to the future military possibilities. In the meantime, there is a general impression that a very great deal depends upon the speed with which matters develop in Spain. It seems unlikely that Germany will embark on a policy

which may involve her militarily in one direction at a time when Italian action might well force complications in another area.

So far as the German army is concerned, it is only possible to reiterate once again the following points:—

The German army is working at highest pressure.

There is no sign at the moment—apart from rumour in civilian circles—that there is likely to be any slackening of the armament programme. But the appointment of Herren Funk and Brinkmann to the Reichsbank does not necessarily imply that we should exclude this possibility.

Domestic details of mobilisation as far as the Wehrkreise are concerned are apparently to be completed by the 1st February.

There is nothing yet either to confirm or to contradict the rumours of mobilisation at an early date. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that a start is possibly being made with effecting a gradual military concentration in Bavaria and Austria, and that the possibility of a policy *vis-à-vis* the Ukraine, involving military action against Poland, has at any rate been averted for the moment.

The army is logically clamouring—under its breath—for a breathing-space. It is not getting it.

I have, &c.,

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE,
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 24

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 39 [N 750/105/38]

MOSCOW, January 26, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that M. Litvinov received me yesterday for the usual interview prior to the presentation of Letters of Credence.

2. I was accompanied by Mr. Vereker, counsellor in His Majesty's Embassy, to whose obviously friendly relations with M. Litvinov the comparative informality of the interview was undoubtedly due to a large extent. At the same time it was obvious that his Excellency preferred to confine the conversation to generalities.

3. I began by telling M. Litvinov of the excellent impression produced on British public opinion of all classes by the recent Grover incident,¹ which I ventured to take as a good augury for the success of my mission. Later on, after deploring the tendency of English friends of the Soviet Union to accuse His Majesty's Government of cold-shouldering this country, I told his Excellency that your Lordship had particularly instructed me to do anything

¹ Mr. B. Grover, a London engineer, had flown without permission to Moscow to see his Russian wife. After being detained for a few weeks he was allowed to leave the country accompanied by his wife.

in my power to dissipate any such impression, if it existed here, as it constituted an utter misrepresentation of our real desire to know—and give friendly consideration to—the Soviet Government's views on international problems. M. Litvinov replied that he was very glad indeed to hear me say so, and, though this answer is capable of a double meaning, it was at any rate preferable to the tirade on our misdemeanours for which I was somewhat prepared.

4. The conversation then turning on the European situation, M. Litvinov professed his usual optimism on the score of any Ukrainian adventure by Herr Hitler, who, he added, always advanced in whatever direction promised the easiest success and would therefore hesitate to add another to the well-known historical failures by attempting to invade Russian territory. (These words of M. Litvinov were, I may perhaps point out, but a politer version of the sneers of the 'Journal de Moscou' at the weakness of the Western Powers, for which please see Mr. Vereker's telegram No. 1, Saving,² of the 12th January.) In the Russian Ukraine there was, he said, no separatist Government for Herr Hitler to use as a tool, but Germany was undoubtedly making preparations and he thought Poland was in for a bad time. Other statements about Germany were that a German delegation was arriving in a few days' time to discuss a trade agreement, and that the Soviet Union were chary of admitting German experts and engineers into this country, as they were all political agents in disguise.

5. His Excellency showed interest in Brazil.³ He did not, to my relief, ask me what I knew about Communist agitation there, but questioned me as to the numbers of the German and Italian colonists in that country and expressed the opinion that such pockets of fascism in South America and elsewhere were an important factor in world unrest.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

² Not printed.

³ Sir W. Seeds had been Ambassador in Brazil, 1930-5.

No. 25

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Troutbeck (Prague)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 928/3/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 27, 1939, 5.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 9.¹

Following is substance of communiqué issued to press this afternoon.

Begins:—

Agreements between the Czecho-Slovak Government, the French Government, and His Majesty's Government concerning financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia were signed today.

¹ No. 15.

His Majesty's Government will, subject to Parliamentary approval, treat as a free grant to the Czecho-Slovak Government £4 millions out of the advance of £10 millions already made. This sum of £4 millions will be paid into a special account and will be used to provide foreign exchange for refugees emigrating from Czecho-Slovakia in accordance with an agreed scale.

The French Government will, subject to Parliamentary approval, take over from the Czecho-Slovak Government responsibility for the interest on and repayment of the 5 per cent. Czecho-Slovak Loan 1937-42. The amounts which the Czecho-Slovak Government would have had to provide for the interest on this loan will be paid to a special account and will be also used to provide foreign exchange for refugees emigrating from Czecho-Slovakia; the amount corresponding to the capital of the loan will in 1942 be used for the same purpose, so far as required.

The expenditure referred to in the two preceding paragraphs will be administered by the Czecho-Slovak Refugee Institute and will be controlled by the authorised representatives of His Majesty's Government and the French Government respectively.

His Majesty's Government and the French Government will, subject to Parliamentary approval, jointly and severally guarantee a loan of £8 millions to be issued by the Czecho-Slovak Government in London. Out of the proceeds of the Guaranteed Loan, the sum of £6 millions will be used to fund part of the £10 millions already advanced to Czecho-Slovakia and the balance (£4 millions) of that advance will (as already stated) be granted as a free gift.

The total financial assistance given by His Majesty's Government and the French Government to the Czecho-Slovak Government will thus amount to approximately £16 millions. Of this—

- (a) approximately £8 millions (viz. £4 millions from the United Kingdom Government and 700 million French francs, loan taken over by the French Government) is granted as a free gift and will be used for providing foreign exchange for refugees who emigrate.
- (b) The remaining £8 millions (the proceeds of the Guaranteed Loan) will be used for the relief and settlement of refugees in Czecho-Slovakia and—so far as not required for that purpose—for the general purposes of economic reconstruction. Detailed statements of the expenditure will be furnished to His Majesty's Government and the French Government.

In the treatment of refugees, there will be no discrimination on religious, political or racial grounds. Ends.

The texts of the agreements and of letters exchanged between Dr. Pospisil and the Secretary of State, copies of which follow by bag,² will be published on Wednesday.

Repeated to Paris.

² Not printed. The text of the Loan Agreements was published in Cmd. 5933 of 1939.

No. 26

Mr. Mallet (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 43 Telegraphic [C 1093/15/18]

WASHINGTON, January 27, 1939, 5.57 p.m.

Your telegram No. 37.¹

Secretary of State sent for me this morning and spoke in his usual cryptic and circumlocutory manner. What he said was that the United States Government had for some time been basing their policy upon the possibility of just such a situation arising as was foreshadowed in your telegram. Their information led them also to envisage the various possibilities mentioned. He said that I would certainly have observed that the speeches and acts of the President and Administration in recent months had all been directed towards meeting such a situation.

Mr. Hull went on in his most oracular style to indicate that at the present moment reasons of internal politics made it necessary for the President to proceed with great caution. United States Government did not want to raise any false hopes or cause misunderstandings either at home or abroad. To my direct question he hinted that the President would not be sending you any specific message or making any definite suggestions. From this I deduce also that the President will make no public statement.

Mr. Hull's tone was most friendly and he repeated again that the words and deeds of the Administration made it clear how they were facing the situation.

¹ No. 5.

No. 27

Sir N. Bland (The Hague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 1 Telegraphic [C 1111/15/18]

THE HAGUE, January 27, 1939, 6.45 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan:—

Before your telegram No. 4¹ of January 26 which contained many corrupt groups had been completely decyphered Minister for Foreign Affairs sent for me spontaneously this morning to communicate to me a telegram just received from the Netherlands Minister at Washington. This was to the following effect:

The President had just sent for him to say that from three separate and reliable sources he had received information which led him to believe that Germany and Italy had signed an offensive and defensive alliance to which Japan was to be asked to adhere. Germany was going to move westwards and amongst her various plans (none of which contemplated an attack on

¹ No. 18.

Belgium) was the possibility of provoking a conflict with the Netherlands probably at the moment when Italy formally put forward her territorial claims on France.

2. M. Patijn said that up to the present he had attached no importance to constant rumours that had been circulated about an attack on Netherlands and he confirmed my impression that this was the general attitude of his compatriots. But he said that information in this telegram coming in such a manner from such a source left him considerably disquieted; and his reason for sending for me was to ask me to find out urgently from London whether you had received similar information from Washington or information from any other source corroborating Mr. Roosevelt's story. I should be grateful if you could enable me to answer this enquiry as soon as possible.

3. M. Patijn begged me to observe the utmost secrecy in regard to the matter: up to the present he had only taken the Prime Minister and the French and Belgian Ministers into his confidence besides myself as he thought it most important that so serious an allegation whether true or not should not become known to more than the minimum number of people. I assured him that his communication would be treated with the utmost discretion.

4. This of course gave me good opening for putting [the] delicate question suggested at the end of your paragraph 5 though I am afraid without any satisfactory result, the impression I got being that M. Patijn was anxious still to avoid contemplation of such an extremely unpleasant contingency. He repeated twice that in spite of source he had great difficulty in believing report from Washington: he had no independent confirmation from any reliable source at his disposal and though he could well understand that Germans wanted Dutch ports particularly Rotterdam he did not believe that they really wanted a war.

5. In face of this reply it would be unwise at this stage to hazard any estimate of probable attitude of Netherlands Government to actual threat from Germany; and as regards nation as a whole, although having been here for so short a time I hesitate to express any opinion on the subject, my instinct suggests that they would do everything possible to avoid actual hostilities but that point would come where their patience would be exhausted before German demands and they would then put up such stubborn resistance as they could. This would be my forecast in the event of German attack beginning in correct diplomatic fashion; but one of the most general rumours today is, I gather, that Germans will commit a lightning descent into Holland without warning. Should she do this I think that the Dutch would fight literally to the last ditch.

6. Middle of your paragraph 5 still remains undecypherable so that I am not clear as to source of 'reports' upon which you are anxious for M. Colijn's opinion. In view, however, of M. Patijn's statement that they have no reports I doubt whether I could do any good by pursuing this line in any case. And after my friendly interview with the latter this morning I do not propose for the moment to ask to see the former. In any case I shall await your reply to this telegram before taking any further action.

7. Remainder of Washington telegram is also of great interest and I am sending copy of it by special bag tonight.² M. Patijn made no comment on last three paragraphs beyond saying 'I suppose they might want to make a sort of Czecho-Slovakia out of us'.

Please see also my immediately following telegram.³

² See No. 39.

³ No. 30.

No. 28

Mr. Mallet (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 44 Telegraphic [C 1094/15/18]

WASHINGTON, January 27, 1939, 7.8 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I am afraid you may find this rather discouraging. I am sure that the President and Secretary of State are only too anxious to do what they can to help but are obsessed by the risk of going too far ahead of public opinion and thus losing control of Congress which would be so essential if the anticipated crisis arises.

I interpret President's demands [*sic*]² to be due to the fact that his relations with the new Congress are passing through a critical phase. Strength of opposition is already being shown in the stiffness of the fight over the first important bill of the session to provide for supplementary appropriations for the relief fund. This week the new defence appropriations will be up for debate and although they are expected to pass fairly easily the isolationists are full of fight and many critics are accusing the President of being abnormally alarmist. I am told moreover that sentiment in the Senate is that there is little chance in the present circumstances of any modifications of Neutrality Act in the direction of giving greater latitude to the President.

Only to-day there are indications of fresh trouble with Congress over the revelation that the French Government have been authorized by a decision of United States Cabinet to test with a view to purchase some of the newest secret aeroplanes under construction for War Department. One member of the Senate Military Affairs Committee has suggested that the real aim of the President's armaments programme is really to assist present rearmament of foreign nations.

In these circumstances President Roosevelt evidently feels he must exercise greatest care not to give a handle to the isolationists and he presumably feels he has in his speech of January 4³ said as much as he safely can for the present.

¹ No. 26.

² This word appears to be an error in transmission.

³ In a message to Congress on January 4, Mr. Roosevelt had described the external dangers to the U.S.A., and had said that the world had grown so small that no nation could be safe in its will to peace as long as any other single powerful nation refused to settle its grievances at the council table.

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 38 Telegraphic [C 1143/15/18]

BERLIN, January 27, 1939, 7.9 p.m.

My telegram No. 37.¹

The following are the comments of the Military Attaché. It is logical to suppose that Hitler may contemplate forcing a major war this year as he most probably considers that his military position *vis-à-vis* France and England is now better than it will be for the next two or three years. He may equally logically contemplate making colonial demands and backing them up by menaces.

The army is capable of overrunning Holland at once but I do not believe that it is numerous enough or adequately equipped and trained to feel any confidence in its ability to turn the Maginot Line via the Low Countries. Neither for similar and other reasons do I believe even in co-operation with Italy it would advocate such action through Switzerland. Much however depends on the extent to which the Axis feels it is able to ensure interference with the transport of French troops from Africa, and developments in Spain must be an important factor in this connexion.

I have the impression that the army, which is working at the highest pressure, is definitely preparing for possible action on a large scale.

This has been admitted in so many words by at least one officer of the War Ministry. Although the army might be opposed to an attempt to turn the Maginot Line it will depend on Hitler's personal appreciation of the situation. The army is at least more confident of its own value and less apprehensive of French and British military efficiency than it was last autumn.

Any decision of Herr Hitler's will probably be influenced largely if not chiefly by the value which he places on his air force and by his information regarding the state of public opinion in France and England. Should he decide to strike against France we can be sure he will order the most vigorous possible offensive and must logically anticipate that in such a case his armies might prefer to tackle the Maginot Line from the flanks and not frontally.

The impression here in military circles is that every effort is being made to square Poland. It is also generally accepted that something big as regards military action is in the wind. It is however as yet by no means clear what German programme for 1939 may be and the possibility that it may involve action in a south-easterly direction is largely believed. Such action might not necessarily entail military action but military menaces would certainly be employed to further economic demands.

While I am (? not)² competent to express an opinion on technical aspect of the military situation I agree in general with the Military Attaché's observations from the military point of view.

¹ No. 20.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 30

Sir N. Bland (The Hague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 2 Telegraphic [C 1112/15/18]

THE HAGUE, January 27, 1939, 7.28 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan:—

My immediately preceding telegram¹ and my letter to Mr. Strang of last night.²

At the end of our interview the Minister for Foreign Affairs said he had been thinking over what I said to him last night and that he would, particularly in view of information from America, much like to see Secretary of State when he goes to England next month if it could be done without attracting attention. He seemed to attach importance to this condition though he did not definitely make it a *sine qua non*. I said that I thought if he really wished it arrangements could probably be so made as to prevent news of such a meeting appearing in the press and he said in that case he would be very glad if I would take the matter up with London. His unveiling was on Wednesday morning February 15 and if necessary he could arrive in the early morning of preceding day and be at Lord Halifax's disposal at any time that he liked to name. I hope the Secretary of State will feel able to encourage this idea.

¹ No. 27.

² Not printed. This letter referred to M. Patijn's forthcoming visit to London (for the unveiling of a memorial to Grotius, on February 15) and suggested that the Secretary of State might see M. Patijn.

No. 31

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 12 Telegraphic [C 1101/54/18]

WARSAW, January 27, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 9.¹

The impression which I have gained from the conversations with authoritative sources is that as was expected the visit of Herr von Ribbentrop is not likely to lead to any immediate concrete results but has enabled both him and M. Beck to emphasize the good relations which exist between the two countries. Some people attach significance to Herr von Ribbentrop's reference to deepening friendly relations whereas M. Beck only spoke of their continuance.

I understand that Herr von Ribbentrop had a conversation of two hours with M. Beck yesterday evening but have been unable hitherto to secure any details. Herr von Ribbentrop in conversation at a reception at the German Embassy last night told me that he was very satisfied with results of his visit but that we need not expect anything sensational from it.

¹ No. 17.

The French Ambassador informs me that under instructions from his Government he is to see Herr von Ribbentrop this morning just before he departs in order to express to him the satisfaction of France as Poland's ally at the reaffirmation of goodwill between Germany and Poland. The object of this *démarche* is to demonstrate that this part of Europe is not entirely under the domination of the Berlin-Rome Axis and to emphasize the special interest which France has in Poland.

Incidentally I may mention that the Czecho-Slovak Minister informs me that during the recent visit of the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs to Berlin the latter was told that it would be well that Czecho-Slovakia should be on good (? terms)² with Poland and Hungary.

General impression among my colleagues is that Germany desires as far as possible to secure the neutrality of Poland so as to have her hands free to deal with other questions while at the same time she is endeavouring to bring Poland (? under the)² influence of the Berlin-Rome Axis and thus isolate Roumania.

Repeated to Berlin.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 32

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 11 Telegraphic [C 1115/92/55]

WARSAW, January 27, 1939, 8.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 8.¹

M. Beck told me last night that he understood from the Polish Ambassador in London that it was proposed that he should visit London for a meeting of the Committee of Three at the beginning of March but he feared that he could not go so early in the month and would prefer the middle or end. I have the impression that he is anxious to make this visit.

I asked M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet yesterday whether we might expect any new development as regards Danzig within the next few weeks. M. Lubienski said that he did not think that any concrete agreement with Germany was likely and on present appearances I doubt whether there will be any striking change in the situation at Danzig before the middle of March.

The official in charge of Danzig affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told me yesterday that during M. Beck's recent conversation with Herr Hitler the latter had said that at some time it would be necessary to render the passage of German traffic across the Corridor from the Reich to Danzig easier. This M. Gwiazdoski interpreted as only meaning that the Germans should be able to cross the Polish frontier without passports or other formalities but he insisted that any idea of a corridor across the Corridor was unthinkable.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported briefly the interview recorded in No. 10.

No. 33

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 14 Telegraphic [C 1090/15/18]

WARSAW, January 27, 1939, 8.18 p.m.

My telegram No. 12.¹

French Ambassador informs me that during his visit to Herr von Ribbentrop today, the latter expressed appreciation of his remarks regarding relations between Poland and Germany and was generally friendly. He spoke, however, somewhat acidly of references in M. Bonnet's speech² of yesterday to Franco-Soviet Pact and had evidently concluded, from the brevity of the account he had received, that there had been no reference to Germany in the speech. M. Noël told him of the remarks which M. Bonnet had made on this subject and Herr von Ribbentrop became less excited.

He did, however, speak with considerable bitterness of the attitude of His Majesty's Government which he considered was largely responsible for the present unrest in Europe. He said that had they not acted as they did last May the events of September would not have taken place.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 31.

² In a speech on foreign affairs in the Chamber of Deputies M. Bonnet declared that French relations with Soviet Russia and Poland had been marked by close and constant contacts, and that the engagements undertaken with these countries remained in force. He also spoke of the Franco-German Agreement of December 6, 1938.

No. 34

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 13 Telegraphic [C 1102/54/18]

WARSAW, January 27, 1939, 8.20 p.m.

Anodyne communiqué issued after Herr von Ribbentrop's visit merely repeats desire on both sides to continue collaboration in the work of appeasement.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 35

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 27, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 14 Telegraphic [N 513/411/38]

MOSCOW, January 27, 1939, 8.44 p.m.

My telegram No. 10.¹

The German Embassy here state that there will be no 'delegation' but that

¹ No. 13.

Herr Schnurre head of the Eastern Department of the economic section of the German Foreign Office who is a personal friend of the Ambassador will visit Moscow shortly and will take this opportunity to explore with the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade possibility of a trade agreement.

2. German Secretary informed a member of my staff in confidence that he thought it likely that an agreement would in fact be concluded. He mentioned as probable a German credit to Soviet Government of between 2 and 300 million marks and said that principal war materials which German Government expected to buy from this country were timber and manganese. In return Germans would supply machinery and possibly armaments. Soviet Government were anxious for immediate delivery of the latter and this requirement presented the chief difficulty which however should not prove insuperable. Germans appear to have an exaggerated idea of the business done by the representatives of Metropolitan Vickers at present in Moscow and this may have proved an additional incentive.

3. They have been in touch with Soviet Embassy and trade delegation. It appears that Merekalov is showing himself very active in promoting a trade agreement and Germans express themselves well satisfied with him as an Ambassador. There is as yet no indication of any impending political or military contacts.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 36

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 41 Telegraphic [N 503/411/38]

BERLIN, January 27, 1939, 9.26 p.m.

Your telegram No. 7 to Warsaw.¹

The Soviet Embassy inform me that the German Government will send a small mission to Moscow with the object of developing trade and renewing credits within the framework of the existing trade agreement. There is apparently no present intention of negotiating a new treaty. The German Government are concerned at the decrease in the volume of trade with Soviet Russia which has fallen from the first to the sixth place. I am also told that certain minerals such as manganese are urgently required by Germany.

Repeated to Moscow and Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. See No. 16, note 1.

No. 37

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 1)

No. 5 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1352/15/18]

BUCHAREST, January 27, 1939

Warsaw telegram No. 4¹ and Berlin telegram No. 16.²

Polish Ambassador here told me that Herr Hitler had given Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs an 'official assurance' that Ukraine was not a live issue and could only become one for Germany if Russia showed signs of disintegrating.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 531.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 534.

No. 38

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 75 [N 511/92/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, January 27, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation to-day with the Soviet Ambassador, M. Maisky, turning to the general outlook in Europe, said that he anticipated some new crisis before very long, but did not anticipate that this would arise over the Ukraine. If it should emerge in connexion with the Italian claims on France, he greatly feared that the world might witness yet another bloodless victory for the dictators. I told M. Maisky that I thought his argument failed to have regard to the distinction, so far as this country and France were concerned, between Czecho-Slovakia and, for the sake of argument, demands that the French Government would feel, or that we might feel, vitally affected our own security, and it would in my view be highly dangerous to assume that the latter class of case would be handled in the same way as had been the question of Czecho-Slovakia. To this M. Maisky said that he devoutly hoped I was right.

2. I asked M. Maisky whether it was correct, as we had been informed, that a German trade delegation was shortly proceeding to Moscow. This, he said, was the fact, and was taking place on German initiative, just as the recent arrangement with Poland had taken place upon the initiative of the Polish Government. In speaking of the possibility of concluding a trade agreement with Germany, M. Maisky observed, not without some humour, that, if reports were true that we might be considering the termination of the Anglo-Soviet Commercial Treaty,¹ it was necessary to have a commercial treaty with somebody. I told him that, so far as I was aware, this question had by no means reached the stage that he appeared to suggest, and that,

¹ Printed in Cmd. 5253 of 1936.

while I knew we had had cause to feel that the existing trade agreement was not working to our full satisfaction, I had no doubt at all that it was the desire of His Majesty's Government to develop trade relations between the two countries as full and as profitable as possible.

3. From this M. Maisky proceeded to a long disquisition on the subject of the existing trade treaty, of which the conclusion, so far as I could follow it, was that it operated with undue severity at the present time for the Soviet Government and that part of the reason for the diminution of Russian purchases of British exports was, firstly, that a good deal of their money available for purchase was devoted to purchasing re-exports through this country of the products of other parts of the Empire, and, secondly, that many of the goods which they desired to order in this country could not be supplied on account of the pressure of our own rearmament programme. I told M. Maisky that I should naturally transmit the observations that he had made on this topic to the President of the Board of Trade, as I could claim no special knowledge of the questions he had raised myself.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 39

*Letter from Sir N. Bland (The Hague) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received January 30)*

[C 1152/15/18]

BRITISH LEGATION, THE HAGUE, *January 27, 1939*

Here is the telegram from Washington¹ in full (French translation made by the Dutch). In view of the primary purpose of your telegram,² I thought it best to refrain, in my reply to the latter, from comment on the latter part of the former.

As I have reported before, Patijn's opinion is that we couldn't stand aside while Holland is invaded by Germany. But I wonder what we could do in the event of Holland being forced to yield to German influence to a point at which she would not feel compelled to fight but the concessions wrung from her without fighting would constitute a serious menace for us. I don't want to add to the complexity of your deliberations, but that seems to me a possibility which ought to be taken into account.

I hope the idea of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Patijn may be pursued. By the date when Patijn comes over, you will presumably have worked out a policy and it would be a golden opportunity for an exchange of views at first-hand, which I suspect that Patijn would welcome, though he probably refrained deliberately from saying so to me this morning in so many words.

May I say how grateful I was to get your telegram? I had been wondering

¹ See No. 27.

² No. 18.

for some time what the official reactions at home were to all the *bruits qui courent*, and it is very helpful to me to know.

NEVILLE BLAND

ENCLOSURE IN No. 39

Télégramme du Ministre des Pays-Bas à Washington au Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à La Haye, en date du 26 janvier 1939

Le Président, m'ayant fait inviter à venir lui rendre visite aujourd'hui, m'a dit qu'il avait de sérieuses raisons de s'inquiéter en ce qui concerne le sort des Pays-Bas. M. Roosevelt précisa qu'il avait reçu de trois sources différentes, toutes dignes de foi, des renseignements selon lesquels l'Allemagne et l'Italie auraient signé une alliance offensive et défensive, à laquelle ces Puissances seraient d'accord pour faire adhérer le Japon. L'Allemagne serait décidée à se tourner vers l'ouest. Dans un parmi plusieurs projets, dont aucun ne viserait la Belgique, il est question d'un conflit avec les Pays-Bas que voudrait provoquer l'Allemagne au cours des mois prochains, probablement à l'époque environ à laquelle l'Italie adresserait à la France des revendications territoriales sous une forme officielle.

À la question que je me permettais de poser au Président de savoir si, dans le cas où cette hypothèse se réaliserait, les Pays-Bas se trouveraient seuls, M. Roosevelt répondit que cela dépendrait de la Grande-Bretagne. Dans l'absence d'une convention néerlandaise-britannique le Président prévoit que la Grande-Bretagne ne pourrait intervenir qu'après un refus de la part de l'Allemagne de régler l'incident provoqué par des moyens pacifiques; sur ces négociations les États-Unis pourraient peut-être exercer de l'influence.

Le Président déclara voir pour les Pays-Bas un avenir de quasi-indépendance, Rotterdam et Amsterdam constituant des ports-francs allemands et le pays tout entier étant incorporé dans l'économie allemande.

Le Président de la Commission pour les Affaires Étrangères du Sénat me disait aujourd'hui qu'en ce moment l'opinion publique aux États-Unis se rallierait à la désignation formelle d'un agresseur, mais qu'elle n'admettrait pas des mesures dépassant la prestation de secours financier et économique à un pays attaqué.

No. 40

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris) and Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

No. 18¹ Telegraphic [C 1144/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 28, 1939, 7.10 p.m.*

His Majesty's Government would like to lay before the French and Belgian Governments the impressions they have formed as to the plans for the not distant future which Herr Hitler may now be forming, and at the same time to put the French and Belgian Governments in possession of the views

¹ No. 18 to Paris; No. 5 to Brussels.

and intentions of His Majesty's Government in the event of these plans materialising.

2. I request accordingly that you will immediately make the following communication to the Government to which you are accredited, emphasising its extremely secret and confidential character.

3. As early as November there were indications which gradually became more definite that Hitler was planning a further foreign adventure for the spring of 1939. At first it appeared—and this was confirmed by persons in Hitler's entourage—that he was thinking of expansion in the East and in December the prospect of establishing an independent Ukraine under German vassalage was freely spoken of in Germany.

4. Since then reports indicate that Hitler, encouraged by Ribbentrop, Himmler and others, is considering an attack on the Western Powers as a preliminary to subsequent action in the East. Some of these reports emanate from highly placed Germans of undoubted sincerity who are anxious to prevent this crime; others come from foreigners, hitherto Germanophil, who are in close touch with leading German personalities. They have received some confirmation in the reassurance which Hitler appears to have given to M. Beck concerning his plans in the East, as well as in the support which Germany has recently given to Italy's claims against France.

5. There is as yet no reason to suppose that Hitler has made up his mind on any particular plan. Our reports show that he may:

(i) Push Italy to advance her claims by force and use his obligations to Italy as a pretext for embarking on war. This course would have the advantage of ensuring the participation of Italy from the outset.

(ii) Begin by launching an attack on Holland. The recent deterioration of German-Dutch relations and the critical tone adopted towards Holland by the German press are significant. Once in command of Holland and the Dutch coast, Germany would aspire to dictate terms to us and paralyse France. She might at the same time bribe Poland and perhaps other countries with promises of colonial loot; in that event the Dutch East Indies might be allocated to Japan.

(iii) Put forward impossible colonial demands in his speech of January 30 in the form of an ultimatum. This seems the least likely hypothesis.

(iv) Make a sudden air attack without pretext on England and follow up this initial surprise by land and sea operations against the Western Powers. We have received definite information from a highly placed German that preparations for such a *coup* are now being made. He has, however, no information to show that Hitler has yet made up his mind to execute this plan.

6. We have received recently reliable information to the effect that the German Government are pressing for the conversion of the anti-Comintern Pact into a Pact pledging the signatories to give each other military assistance against unprovoked attack by a third Power; that the Italian Government have agreed, and that the Japanese Government are considering the matter. Our information is that the German Government wish this Pact to be con-

cluded in time for it to be announced by Herr Hitler in the speech he is expected to make on January 30.

7. All the reports are agreed in forecasting that the danger period will begin towards the end of February. This is borne out by independent reports to the effect that orders have been issued for mobilisation about the middle of February. We have already received news of preliminary mobilisation measures and the formation of a reserve regiment composed of time-expired conscripts has been recently established in Bavaria. Moreover the economic and financial crisis with which Germany is now faced might well compel Hitler to take some action, and the choice before him is either to slow down his rearmament and to abandon his policy of expansion, or else to launch into some foreign adventure in the hope that it will both distract attention from domestic difficulties and supply him with the material resources which the country urgently requires and can no longer buy abroad. There can be little doubt that a man of Hitler's temperament may be tempted to choose the second alternative.

8. His Majesty's Government have no wish to be alarmist, but to-day, as in July, August and September of last year, it is remarkable that there is one general tendency running through all the reports, and it is impossible to ignore them, particularly in view of the character and proved reliability of many of the informants. Moreover, Hitler's mental condition, his insensate rage against Great Britain and his megalomania, which are alarming the moderates around him, are entirely consistent with the execution of a desperate *coup* against the Western Powers. The removal of moderates such as Schacht and Wiedemann is symptomatic. It has been suggested in some quarters that the German people would not follow Hitler on such a course and that a revolt would ensue. We have examined this aspect, but the authorities on Germany whom we have consulted including anti-Nazi Germans of sound judgement are agreed that Hitler's orders would be carried out and that no revolt can be anticipated at all events during the initial stages of a war.

9. His Majesty's Government have carefully considered the situation in the light of these reports and have decided to accelerate as far as possible the preparations of their defensive and counter-offensive measures.

10. In the event of Germany picking a quarrel with Holland, His Majesty's Government are considering the desirability as a matter of tactics and precaution of being ready at once with a proposal to both Governments for the selection by neutral Governments of a board of three arbitrators. Such a proposal might not prove effective, but if arbitration were rejected or overriden by Germany, the issue would be clear and His Majesty's Government would have *locus standi* for appropriate action.

11. Meanwhile His Majesty's Government have been considering what would be their attitude in the event of an unprovoked German invasion of Holland, and their provisional view, subject to confirmation, is as follows.

12. There is, it is true, no hope that such military action as His Majesty's Government could take would prevent Holland from being overrun by the

German armies, and the restoration of her territory would depend on the final outcome of the war.

13. Nevertheless, the strategical importance of Holland and her colonies is so great that in the view of His Majesty's Government a German attack on Holland must be regarded as a direct threat to the security of the Western Powers. Failure to take up such a challenge would place Germany in a position of overwhelming predominance in Europe, and in such circumstances His Majesty's Government are accordingly disposed to think that they would have no choice but to regard a German invasion of Holland as a *casus belli* assuming that Holland resisted invasion.

14. As already indicated, the matter will be further considered by His Majesty's Government. Their final considered opinion will in due course be communicated to the French (Belgian) Government, and in the meanwhile it would be of great value to His Majesty's Government to be put in possession of any views or suggestions of the French (Belgian) Government.

No. 41

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Mallet (Washington)

No. 44 Telegraphic [C 1147/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 28, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

My telegram No. 37.¹

1. Please communicate following to the State Department for the personal and secret information of the President.

2. Since their last message His Majesty's Government have been considering what would be their attitude in the event of an unprovoked German invasion of Holland and their provisional view, subject to confirmation, is as follows.

3. There is, it is true, no hope that such military action as His Majesty's Government could take would prevent Holland from being overrun by the German armies, and the restoration of her territory would depend on the final outcome of the war.

4. Nevertheless, the strategical importance of Holland and her colonies is so great that in the view of His Majesty's Government a German attack on Holland must be regarded as a direct threat to the security of the Western Powers. Failure to take up such a challenge would place Germany in a position of overwhelming predominance in Europe, and in such circumstances His Majesty's Government are accordingly disposed to think that they would have no choice but to regard a German invasion of Holland as a *casus belli* assuming that Holland resisted invasion.

5. His Majesty's Government are sounding the French and Belgian Governments confidentially and on receipt of the latter's views they will further consider the question.

¹ No. 5.

No. 42

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 30)

No. 35 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1199/17/18]

BERLIN, *January 28, 1939*

Your telegram No. 17.¹

I called on the French Ambassador last night and left with him a draft of a communication to the German Government. He said that he had not received any instructions from Paris and that if they did not arrive by Monday he would telegraph. The only comment, he added, made was on Signor Mussolini's second preliminary question namely the establishment of neutrality of Czecho-Slovakia where he said Franco-Czech Pact was concerned on which the Soviet-Czech Pact was dependent.

Speaking privately I expressed the opinion that the Munich Agreement superseded the Franco-Czech Pact. The Ambassador agreed that it did so psychologically but not juridically and he thought the guarantee would have to contain a statement to the effect that this pact automatically lapsed.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 19.

No. 43

Minute by Mr. Strang

[C 1205/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 28, 1939*

M. de Margerie¹ came this morning, on instructions from the French Ambassador, to show me some telegrams of current interest received from French representatives abroad. The following are the main points of interest in these telegrams:—

In a telegram dated January 23, M. Coulondre reported from Berlin that he understood that trains full of German troops had crossed Czecho-Slovakia in the direction of Austria, and that between the 9th and 14th January great quantities of coal had been sent across Czecho-Slovakia in the direction of Austria and Italy. The Czech railway line in question was completely occupied by such transport. He had some reason to believe that further train-loads of troops, amounting to a division, were likely to be sent. This information apparently came from Czech sources. The Czecho-Slovak Government had no alternative but to acquiesce.

In a telegram dated January 24, M. François-Poncet reported from Rome that he had reason to believe that the Italians had warned certain categories of specialist reservists (wireless, transport, engineers) for duty. These belonged chiefly to the classes 1901 and 1902.² Their destination was either Spain or Libya. M. François-Poncet's view was that this was a kind of

¹ First Secretary in the French Embassy in London.

² See also Chapter IV.

preliminary measure, not amounting to a real military preparation and in any event not a movement as marked as that which took place last September. Its purpose was probably either to intimidate the French or to provoke them to counter-preparations. It was not at this stage a mobilization.

In a telegram dated January 26, M. François-Poncet reported from Rome that he understood that the remainder of the 1901 class and the 1902 class were to be called up in addition to younger specialists belonging to other classes. He still thought that this was being done as a means of pressure on France, in the hope that it would cause France to weaken and Great Britain to fail in her support of France.

In a telegram dated January 23, the French Chargé d'Affaires at Prague reported that officers of the Czech Army had received orders, in the event of mobilization, to report at certain stations in the ex-Sudeten country, now forming part of Germany. These officers were apparently of Czech nationality and in no way connected with the German population.

In a recent telegram, M. François-Poncet reported the marked attention paid to him by the King of Italy and the rest of the Italian Royal family on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Marie.³ The King, it seemed, had gone out of his way to dissociate himself from the press attacks now being made upon France. This information is to be regarded as highly confidential.

In a telegram dated January 25, the French Minister at Bucharest reported that Baron Witzleben, the leader of the Germans in Roumania, had expressed the view that it was Germany's policy to provoke a Franco-Italian conflict. The result would be that one or other, or perhaps both, of these Powers would be seriously weakened, one of them being a possible adversary of Germany, the other an embarrassing friend. In any event, Germany might acquire Trieste as the result of such a war, either as the reward of assistance to Italy, or as part of the plunder of a defeated Italy.

The French Consul-General at Vienna reports the transport of war material southwards across the Brenner, and believes that this material is for the use of German troops who may in the event of war be sent to Italy, Libya, or Abyssinia.

W. STRANG

³ Princess Maria of Savoy was married to Prince Louis of Bourbon-Parma on January 23.

No. 44

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 243 [C 1180/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 28, 1939*

Sir,

I asked the French Ambassador to come and see me to-day and spoke to him on the lines of the telegram¹ that was on the point of issue to Your

¹ No. 40.

Excellency concerning the possibilities of German aggression on Holland. I went through the principal points of the telegram with His Excellency.

2. M. Corbin's first reaction (which, he said, was personal to himself) was to anticipate that while his Government would probably take the same view as His Majesty's Government about the gravity of any attack on Holland, they would also, he thought, enquire what would be the attitude of this country in the event of a German attack on Switzerland. He went on to say that such information as was at the disposal of the French Government, which he had given instructions should be placed also at the disposal of the Foreign Office, led them to feel that the more probable point of danger was Roumania. There appeared to be a certain movement of troops and the like in that direction, and Roumania itself would, of course, be a very valuable prize from the economic point of view. He thought, however, that, while this was probably the judgment of his Government on the balance of probabilities, they would not by any means exclude the possibility of the attack falling on the West. If the attack was made on either Holland or Switzerland or both, the principal inducement of the German Government no doubt would be that of laying their hands upon ready money.

3. In reply to what M. Corbin had said about Switzerland, I told him that His Majesty's Government had not yet considered this question, and I could give him, therefore, only my own personal impression, for which I had no right to claim Government approval. My own feeling was that, if such a German attack was made on Switzerland, it ought to be regarded as not less of a direct challenge to the Western Powers than would be an attack on Holland, and that, if as I supposed the French Government were bound so to regard it, I should certainly myself hope that we should decide to support them.

4. I then said to M. Corbin that I thought it would be in our mind, after having had some exchanges of view with the French Government in the diplomatic sphere, to think it desirable that the contacts between our respective Staffs should be made as close and complete as circumstances permitted.

5. This led M. Corbin to say something on the subject of the British land contribution in any such eventuality as we were contemplating. I assured M. Corbin that I was fully sensible of what no doubt was the very general feeling in France on this subject, but that, as he knew very well, it was quite impossible for us in any immediate future to provide equipment for any larger land contribution than we had at present envisaged, and that it was no good asking academic promises. The only way in which the question could be made a practical one was if it was possible for us to see some very considerable expansion of our production capacity, which was, as His Excellency knew, at present wholly occupied with what seemed to be the imperative needs of the development of the Air Force and anti-aircraft guns.

6. M. Corbin said that he appreciated this but he thought that French opinion would have been rather discouraged by the small prominence given in our national appeal to the needs of the Regular Army. As regards actual

military equipment, he said that what he feared was that a crisis might overtake us before we had actually gone into production on some of the vital military equipment needs. His Excellency thought the French Government would be very willing, if it would help, to place any of their models at our disposal for reproduction. I told M. Corbin that I was not competent to discuss these questions, but no doubt they would fall within the purview of any development of the staff conversations that it might be decided to initiate. M. Corbin agreed and said that, in his view, the need for such initiation of closer staff conversations was urgent.

7. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Brussels, The Hague, Berlin, Berne and Rome.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 45

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

No. 58 [C 1181/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 28, 1939*

Sir,

I asked the Belgian Ambassador to call on me to-day and told him of the telegram¹ that was on the point of issue to Your Excellency for communication to his Government, in connexion with the reports of alleged German intentions to attack Holland.

2. The Ambassador made a preliminary comment before I began to the effect that all these rumours seemed always to start from Poland, and he was rather intrigued to find the explanation.

3. As I proceeded, he volunteered the observation that the Dutch did not, so far as he knew, take these reports very seriously, adding however that 'the Dutch always like to live in a fool's paradise'.

4. His Excellency intimated that, as I very well knew, the attitude of the Belgian Government was to permit no violation of their neutral attitude, and that if anybody invaded their territory 'on the ground or in the air they would shoot'. He could not predict what his Government might feel if Holland was invaded. He thought the Dutch would resist, but left on my mind the impression that Belgium would wish to keep out of it, unless obliged to take part by being itself made the object of attack. And in this connexion he added that Belgian policy was necessarily dependent upon public opinion, and the Belgian Government had to take account of the existence of the two races of which their population was composed, and of which the points of view were by no means identical.

5. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Paris, The Hague, Berlin, Berne and Rome.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ No. 40.

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 40 [N 751/105/38]

MOSCOW, January 28, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that I handed to-day to M. Kalinin, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, the letters of His Majesty The King recalling Viscount Chilston and accrediting me as his Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

2. Formalities in this connexion are here reduced to a minimum: no formal speeches are exchanged nor guard of honour provided; and the Soviet Government are apparently prepared to see the incoming Ambassador, with or without his staff, in the plainest of plain clothes. It is, however, the practice of the foreign missions not only to wear uniform on such occasions but to appear in full strength in order to enjoy the rare experience of penetrating into the Kremlin; and I must put on record a proud appreciation of the magnificence of my staff, which is largely composed of veritable sons of Anak.

3. M. Kalinin, accompanied by M. Litvinov—both in lounge suits—received me in his offices in the Kremlin, whither I had been conducted by the 'Chef du Protocole' in a Rolls-Royce car. I handed him His Majesty's Letters to the accompaniment of a few words expressing *inter alia* my satisfaction on returning to this country after a lapse of some forty years: I spoke in Russian, and thereby produced a visible sensation, as my previous interviews with M. Litvinov and M. Potemkin had been carried on in English and French, of which they are masters. This was immediately followed by the presentation of my staff, which ended the official ceremony, and the President, M. Litvinov and I then retired to M. Kalinin's own bureau. The ensuing interview, which generally, I am told, lasts about ten minutes, was on this occasion protracted to about half an hour in a spirit of cordiality verging on good-fellowship. M. Kalinin only speaks Russian: I conformed, lapsing, however, into English whenever the subject called for the *phrase juste*. It is worth noting that M. Litvinov, who most distinctly deserves the highest meed of praise as an interpreter, effaced himself during the whole interview and left all initiative and expression of opinion to the President.

4. M. Kalinin struck me as pleasant, unaffected and intelligent, though perhaps rather lacking in knowledge. He spoke with what seemed undoubted sincerity on the topic of Anglo-Soviet relations, and dilated on the text that, as the continuous bickerings between the Imperial Russian Government and Great Britain had sunk into relative friendliness just prior to the Great War, so also it was possible, and indeed time, for a better understanding to be created between the Soviet and British Governments. I repeated what I had already said previously to M. Litvinov that, far from wishing to cold-shoulder the Soviet Union, as alleged in certain quarters, His Majesty's Government would gladly welcome a continuous exchange of views on inter-

national problems. I also expressed my personal view that, owing to their far-flung territories and to the remarkable diversity of races, languages, climates and products in those territories, the Soviet and British Commonwealths were unique among World States and must in the nature of things have very similar interests where international politics were concerned.

5. M. Kalinin spoke at considerable length on the necessity for good Anglo-Soviet trade relations, and I was sorry to note that he echoed what are now, I hope, out-of-date and unjustified aspersions on the British man of business, who, he thought, lacked the initiative and drive of the German. We did not, he said, seem to want to do business with the Soviet Union. This statement, of course, led to our grievances under the present Trade Agreement, which he countered by saying that surely it was equally satisfactory to the British Commonwealth whether Russia bought English manufactured goods or colonial products. My suggestion that the British factory worker might well expect the Soviet Union, as the Worker's State, to purchase more of his output only elicited chuckles from my hearers.

6. As reported in my telegram No. 15¹ of to-day's date, conversation on the general international situation did not bring any particular enlightenment. Like M. Litvinov, M. Kalinin held, or professed to hold, the view that the Soviet Union is unaffected by the tumult of Western Europe. The Union was, he said, equally unassailable in the Far East, where the Soviet forces were in a position to deal most effectively with the Japanese: it was only his Government's determination to keep the peace that had saved the Japanese army last year.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

¹ Not printed.

No. 47

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 7)

No. 31 [C 1558/92/55]

DANZIG, *January 28, 1939*

My Lord,

With reference to Foreign Office despatch No. 23¹ of the 25th January and previous correspondence regarding the recent conversations at Geneva on the subject of Danzig, I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that several references to it appeared in the Danzig papers at the time of those conversations but that none of these references called for comment. They indicated that, whereas Great Britain and France seemed to favour the maintenance of the *status quo* here, Sweden desired the termination of the League guarantee of the Danzig Constitution and the withdrawal of the High Commissioner.

2. On January 21 Dr. Böttcher, the Head of the Foreign Department of

¹ Not printed. This despatch enclosed a copy of the document printed as No. 540 in Volume III of this Series.

the Danzig Senate, broached the subject of the status of Danzig to me. He said that, whereas a few weeks previously the future of Danzig and Memel had seemed uncertain, the situation had since undergone such a change that, although it is confidently anticipated that Danzig will ultimately be re-incorporated in the Reich, it is desired that the process shall be peaceful and the time of it will depend upon the Führer, consequently Danzigers can afford to be patient. He expressed satisfaction that meanwhile, according to the reports in the press, the Council of the League seems disposed to maintain the *status quo* in the Free City and to allow the High Commissioner to remain here, as desired by Herr Greiser, so that, in the absence of unforeseen developments, the situation may be expected to remain unchanged throughout the present year.

3. This viewpoint is supported by a leading article, entitled 'Danzig—a closed Case of the Geneva League' which appeared on January 21 in No. 18 of the National Socialist Party organ, the 'Danziger Vorposten', and of which a translation is enclosed herewith.² The article is self-explanatory and the first few paragraphs reflect the contempt in which the League of Nations is held here. The last paragraph tacitly recognises that the Danzig slogan 'Zurück zum Reich'³ cannot for the present be regarded as a subject of practical politics and endeavours to explain as palatably as possible to the Danzigers that they must reconcile themselves to their existing political status for a further indefinite period.

4. My American colleague informs me that on January 25 he had a conversation with the German Consul-General, Dr. von Janson, who visited Berlin from January 16 to 21. To an enquiry as to whether Danzig seemed likely to be affected by Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw, Dr. von Janson replied that it was unlikely because it was even uncertain until shortly beforehand whether the visit would actually take place and when Herr Hitler finally decided that it should there was nothing to suggest that there would be any surprises, although it was of course possible that some last minute development might occur after Dr. von Janson left Berlin. To a further enquiry as to what the result of the visit to Warsaw would be, Dr. von Janson replied very emphatically 'nothing'.

5. In all the circumstances it would in fact seem as though the situation, which a few weeks ago appeared to be developing with regard to Danzig, has undergone a complete change, so that conditions here are now likely to remain stable for some time to come. This impression seems to be confirmed by the fact that there is a noticeable relaxation in the underlying tension which existed until recently among the local community which is now showing greater interest in possible developments in south-eastern and western Europe than in the local situation.

6. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin and Warsaw.

I have, &c.,
G. SHEPHERD

² Not printed.

³ i.e. 'Back to the Reich'.

No. 48

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Bland (The Hague)

No. 5 Telegraphic [C 1111/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 29, 1939, 1.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 1.¹

1. You should inform Minister for Foreign Affairs that amongst many reports which we have recently received purporting to indicate Herr Hitler's intentions, there are some which suggest that he is in effect considering an attack on the Western Powers in the near future and that his plans might involve the occupation of Holland.

2. We cannot vouch for the reliability of any of these reports, but a number of them tending in this direction have lately begun to come in, so that it would not be safe to ignore them and His Majesty's Government are carefully considering the position.

3. I agree that for the present you need not ask to see M. Colijn, though if you get the opportunity when you see Patijn again of eliciting any further indication of Dutch attitude, it would be helpful.

¹ No. 27.

No. 49

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 29, 3.40 p.m.)

No. 2 Telegraphic [C 1146/15/18]

BRUSSELS, *January 29, 1939, 1.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 5.¹

I handed to Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning memorandum in accordance with your instructions. His Excellency proposed to show it to the King this afternoon or tomorrow morning and would give me the reply as soon as possible.

Prime Minister is absent until tomorrow.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 40.

No. 50

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 29, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 28 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1145/15/18]

PARIS, *January 29, 1939*

Your telegrams Nos. 18¹ and 19.²

In the absence from Paris of President of the Council, Minister for Foreign

¹ No. 40.

² Not printed. This telegram transmitted a correction to the text of tel. No. 18. The correction was made in the telegraphed version of tel. No. 18 printed above as No. 40.

Affairs and Secretary General I handed this morning to Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs a memorandum marked very secret in the sense of your telegrams under reply.

2. M. Charvériat said that on two points at least information received by the French Government did not tally with ours: viz: (1) It is Japan and not Germany who is pressing for conversion of anti-Comintern pact into a pact of military assistance, and (2) there is no indication to show that Germany is pushing Italy to advance her claims.

3. M. Charvériat admits that French have received on other points information somewhat similar to ours but sources would appear the same and information has not been confirmed from elsewhere.

4. Political Director says that large quantities of war material are reported to have gone to Italy from Germany and two German divisions that were near the Brenner Pass are said to have gone to Trieste but this does not seem certain.

5. I enquired if French had any information regarding the possibility of German attack through Switzerland. M. Charvériat said that a telegram just received from French Ambassador at Berne reported that Swiss military circles were pre-occupied and thought another crisis like that of September was in prospect. They think colonial problem will soon be raised by Germany and Italy. They fear that the Rhine bridges leading from Germany to Switzerland may soon be occupied: they do not however report any movements of German troops but only the construction of cantonments in Vorarlberg.

6. I am to see M. Daladier on his return to Paris at 6.30 this afternoon, and M. Bonnet at 9.30 this evening.

Repeated to Brussels.

No. 51

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 29 Telegraphic [C 1148/15/18]

PARIS, January 29, 1939, 9.43 p.m.

My telegram No. 28.¹

1. I begged M. Daladier, in view of British Cabinet meetings on February 1 and February 2, to give me written reply to my *aide-mémoire* as soon as possible. He hopes to do this on January 30 or January 31.

2. Meanwhile following is gist of his preliminary remarks and impressions:—

3. If Herr Hitler decides to attack in the west most likely plan would seem to be a very comprehensive one through Holland, Switzerland and Tunis at the same time. Despatch of arms and munitions to Italy, and presence of high German officers in Tripoli (reported in my telegram No. 39 Saving² of

¹ No. 50.

² Not printed.

January 28) would seem to indicate that this possibility must be reckoned with.

4. French have secret information reporting construction of numbers of very small German submarines (between 200 and 300 tons) which would easily go through Dutch and other canals.

5. M. Daladier is inclined to think that German attack on Holland should be considered a *casus belli* whether or not Holland decides to defend herself; his idea is that she would not, but that in any case she would be overrun in a week.

6. As for an attack *brusquée* against Great Britain alone, France would automatically come in with us.

7. M. Daladier is perturbed by article in 'Völkischer Beobachter' backing up Italian claims.

Repeated to Brussels.

No. 52

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 31 Telegraphic [C 1150/15/18]

PARIS, January 29, 1939, 9.44 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

M. Daladier enquired rather anxiously whether Great Britain would not soon introduce compulsory military service.

I replied that this seemed to be impossible. He then expressed the fear that arming of our small army was out of date in the way of mechanisation and motorisation etc. I said that our chief effort must of course at present be concentrated upon aviation.

M. Daladier remarked that if any French plan for the above processes could eventually be of use to us he would gladly place them at our disposal.

He assured me in conclusion that between 90 and 100 French military aeroplanes would be produced this month and that thereafter the tempo would be increased.

¹ No. 53. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

No. 53

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 30 Telegraphic [C 1149/15/18]

PARIS, January 29, 1939, 9.45 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I opened by congratulating M. Daladier on his constraint [*sic* ? restraint] ...² speech in the Chamber on January 26.³

¹ No. 51.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ In a speech in the Chamber of Deputies on January 26, M. Daladier said that he was

I asked what was the precise idea he had in mind in his reference to possible conference. He said that he had hoped that President Roosevelt would have taken the hint and summoned one. France was too much a party in all current disputes to do this. He will, I gather, discuss this possibility with M. Bonnet tomorrow and with United States Ambassador, who has just returned to Paris from leave.

M. Daladier feels it is now vital that President Roosevelt should come down unmistakably on the side of democracies by proposing immediate repeal of the Neutrality Act, for instance. This would, he believes, bring dictators to reason.

United States Ambassador and M. Bonnet are lunching with me tomorrow.

M. Daladier expressed warm approval of the Prime Minister's speech.⁴ ready to take up the idea, put forward by M. Blum, of an international conference. Any 'policy of withdrawal' for France would be disastrous, but there was no need to add that she wished to live at peace with her neighbours.

⁴ The reference appears to be to a speech by the Prime Minister at Birmingham on January 28.

No. 54

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 32 Telegraphic [C 1151/15/18]

PARIS, January 29, 1939, 11.20 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs did not add much to what M. Daladier said this afternoon. He agrees with the latter that if Herr Hitler attacks (and in that case he must be mad) it will be on a large scale from Holland to Tunis. We are quite right to have our counter plan in readiness, but meanwhile M. Bonnet means to pretend that Franco-German declaration of Paris is in full operation until Germany violates it.

When Herr von Ribbentrop was at Warsaw he received the French Ambassador who found him annoyed because Poles had suppressed all friendly mention of Germany in their press accounts of M. Bonnet's speech on January 26. This M. Noël was able to put right.¹

Repeated to Brussels.

¹ See also No. 33.

No. 55

Mr. Mallet (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 8.10 p.m.)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 1229/15/18]

WASHINGTON, January 30, 1939, 1.8 p.m.

Your telegram No. 44.¹

Message delivered.

I learn from highly reliable visitor to the White House that both the

¹ No. 41.

President and the State Department anticipate not so much invasion of Holland as a mobilisation on the Dutch frontier and demands for surrender of portion of the Netherlands East Indies. Object would be twofold. 1. To humiliate His Majesty's Government as they believe we would not fight to defend these islands. 2. To secure Japanese adhesion to defensive alliance by bribe of portion of the spoils.

No. 56

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 12.40 p.m.)

No. 16 Telegraphic [N 541/30/59]

MOSCOW, January 30, 1939, 1.32 p.m.

Member of my staff learns in strict confidence from an entirely reliable informant recently in Memel and in touch with German official circles there that 'Anschluss' is expected to take place about March 15. Local National Socialists, who quite openly wear S.S. and S.A. uniforms, are stated to be most impatient but instructions of the German Consulate-General are to restrain them until that date. I should be grateful if the utmost care could be exercised to prevent this information being traced back to its source.

Repeated to Berlin and Riga.

No. 57

Sir N. Bland (The Hague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 9.0 a.m.)

No. 4 Telegraphic [C 1235/15/18]

THE HAGUE, January 30, 1939, 7.8 p.m.

Your telegram No. 5.¹

I spoke accordingly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning. We talked at some length mainly in generalities but one or two things emerged.

2. He said that since he saw me on Friday he had had a military intelligence report which satisfied him that there were no troop movements in this direction in Germany at present. This of course means very little for . . .² Belgian Minister who came to discuss the situation with me this morning and who is kept very well informed by his Military Attaché assured me that German approaches to this frontier are such that Germany could launch an overwhelming force against Holland at such short notice as to be able to capture focal points of Dutch mobilisation before the Dutch had time to mobilise.

3. I mentioned to M. Patijn statement made to me in early hours of yesterday morning by responsible member of his department that Dutch Military Attaché in Paris had been informed by French Deuxième Bureau

¹ No. 48.

² The text is here uncertain.

that they had tracked down current rumours to a German Marxist group in London who were deliberately disseminating them with the object of creating a western block against Germany. M. Patijn seemed prepared to accept this report at its face value but not to attach profound importance to it.

4. Both he and the Belgian Minister agreed with me that if an attack on Holland were definitely premeditated by Germany at the moment Germany could have, and would have, kept her intentions strictly secret. Belgian Minister prefers to explain rumours, and I think he may well be right, as a *ballon d'essai* sent up by German Government to test world reactions. We agreed that on this supposition the information in the latter part of telegram³ from the Netherlands Minister in Washington would be invaluable to them as showing line likely to be taken by the United States Government.

5. Finally I said to M. Patijn I supposed that if the worst comes to the worst the Dutch would defend their front line defences as long as they could and then fall back and let in the water. He said that was their idea and that they were about to spend ten million florins on strengthening the frontier. He estimated the period of possible resistance at 3 to 4 days.

6. Without telling the Belgian Minister of what M. Patijn had said I brought conversation with him round to this point and he put the period at 24 hours at the best. He too thought the Dutch would fight but he did not see what effective resistance they could put up. He also said that when he saw him last week, M. Patijn looked extremely worried. I had not got this impression so strongly, but when I asked the latter this morning whether such news as he had had during the week-end had served to reassure him he said rather the reverse.

7. I trust that in considering the situation Your Lordship will consider also the question of appointing an independent Military Attaché to this post. Major Blake is coming here for two nights next week from Brussels, and will no doubt be able to obtain valuable information, but unless we propose to wash our hands of Holland altogether it seems to me essential . . .⁴ military expert in permanent residence here at any rate until we can see more clearly what the future holds.

³ Enclosure in No. 39.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 58

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 36 Telegraphic [C 1228/15/18]

PARIS, January 30, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 29.¹

In conversation with Military Attaché this morning Colonel Petibon said that views of His Majesty's Government contained in your telegram No. 18² conform in substance to views of French General Staff, who considered Herr

¹ No. 51.

² No. 40.

Hitler's attention is directed more towards the West than towards the East at present. They consider invasion of Holland a possibility, and that if it took place and if the Belgians decided to fight, the latter would have to take this decision on the first day and not on the fifteenth day of a war. He was not himself convinced as to what their attitude would be and he suggested in the present circumstances His Majesty's Government were better placed than the French Government to sound Belgium on the subject.

Repeated to Brussels.

No. 59

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 30, 8.10 p.m.)

No. 17 Telegraphic [N 552/411/38]

MOSCOW, January 30, 1939, 8.29 p.m.

My telegram No. 14.¹

German Embassy now state that Herr Schnurre who had already reached Warsaw and was due to arrive here tomorrow has been recalled to Berlin 'for reasons of service'. They profess ignorance as to whether the visit will or will not take place at a later date. Alleged reason for this sudden change of plan seems to me most inadequate.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ No. 35.

No. 60

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31)

No. 41 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1241/19/18]

BERLIN, January 30, 1939

It is stated in the press of January 28 that as a result of the recent conversations in Berlin between Herr von Ribbentrop and M. Chvalkovsky, the Czech Ministry for Foreign Affairs communicated a note to the German Minister in Prague on January 28 to the effect that the National-Socialist Party and its members on Czecho-Slovak soil may exercise their activities unhindered on the lines laid down by Herr Bohle, Head of the Foreign Organisation of the National-Socialist Party.

M. Chvalkovsky's recent reminder to his countrymen to adopt an attitude of loyalty to Germany is interpreted by the 'Angriff' of January 28 as making it quite clear that in future the activities of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia, which is not officially incorporated in Herr Bohle's organisation, shall be equally unhampered. M. Chvalkovsky's accommodating spirit is ascribed to the firm bearing of Herr Kundt, the leader of the German

minority, 'who has made it clear that no sort of minority policy on the lines of the Geneva Club will be tolerated in the Czecho-Slovakia of our day'.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 61

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 1)

No. 30 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1296/19/18]

PRAGUE, January 30, 1939

According to the press the following official communiqué was published on January 28 in Prague and in Berlin.

'In pursuance of the conversations which took place in Berlin between the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop, and the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Chvalkovsky, the Czecho-Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the German Legation at Prague on January 28 in a *note verbale* that the N.S.D.A.P. and its branches on Czecho-Slovak territory could freely pursue their activities in accordance with the principles laid down by the leader of the foreign organisation of the N.S.D.A.P., Gauleiter State Secretary Bohle.'

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 62

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2)

No. 6 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1351/15/18]

BUDAPEST, January 30, 1939

Minister for Foreign Affairs was good enough to give me today general impressions of his visit to Berlin.¹

He had the conviction that for the present Germany wanted peace. There was more confidence and a marked change in outlook, the leaders feeling that time was no longer working against them. At the same time he noticed considerable uneasiness lest Germany should be led by Italy's impetuosity into adventures in interests which were not her own; this uneasiness however did not diminish Germany's determination to stick by Italy through thick and thin, though she would, no doubt, try to apply the brake if need arose.

There was also a very strong current of feeling against the United States of America not unmixed with anxiety about some deep-laid American plot which was believed to exist but which he did not succeed in fathoming.

As to the Ukraine, Hitler assured him that there were to be no adventures in that direction. He recognized that these could not take place without arousing the hostility of Poland, the agreement with whom had been the foundation of Germany's present greatness.

¹ Count Csaky had paid an official visit to Berlin from January 16 to 18. The Hungarian Government had accepted on January 13 an invitation to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Minister for Foreign Affairs' own view is that most of the noise made about the Ukraine is due to the Vienna Nazis who for self-importance's sake have resuscitated the old pre-war Ukrainian Committee which had been created in Imperial days as a bogey for Russia.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Rome, and Bucharest.

No. 63

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2)

No. 44 [C 1385/19/18]

PRAGUE, *January 30, 1939*

My Lord,

In paragraph 6 of my despatch No. 37¹ of the 24th January I had the honour to report that Dr. Masarik, the Chef de Cabinet of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, had informed me on that date that he expected a definitive railway agreement to be signed in the following day or so.

2. I have subsequently learnt from another official in the Ministry who is more closely connected with the question that the negotiations embracing the whole complex of railway communications between the two countries are unlikely to reach conclusion for several weeks. On the other hand, an Agreement dealing with the specific question of military transport over the railways was signed on the 24th January. A copy of this Agreement was given to me in strict confidence, and I have the honour to transmit to you a translation herewith. You will observe that it provides for German military transports using three routes across this country, two of which cross the Moravian corridor from Silesia to Austria, while Czecho-Slovak military transports are permitted the use of three stretches of line across German territory.

3. This Agreement is, I understand, not to be published, though, as reported in my Savingram No. 26² of the 28th January, the public has been warned to feel no surprise if German soldiers are seen passing through Brno and Prerov. A further official communiqué in the press of the 29th January points to the saving of time which will now be enjoyed by soldiers stationed in Slovakia or Ruthenia when they take short leave in Bohemia. They will be able to go straight through without a change, as also will recruits sent to do their service in the eastern part of the country. It is added that Austrian recruits will similarly proceed to their garrisons via Brno and Prerov, and that transports with military material and with whole military columns will 'naturally' use the system in both directions.

4. It will, of course, be no matter for surprise that the German Government have forced this Agreement upon the Czechs. It is in keeping with their whole policy towards this country since Munich. There *may*, however, be significance in the fact that it has been rushed through immediately after Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit to Berlin and without awaiting the conclusion of the negotiations over the remaining railway questions. So many rumours are in

¹ No. 6.

² Not printed.

circulation that something is planned somewhere for the middle of February that it is impossible not to wonder whether this is not part of the preparation for the alleged plan. I am told that the Agreement was signed by the Ministry of Transport two days before the fact was brought to the notice of the Economic Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

ENCLOSURE IN No. 63

(Translation.)

Supplementary Agreement to the Agreements of October 27 and November 23, 1938, with regard to the resumption of German-Czecho-Slovak Railway Traffic.

PRAGUE, January 24, 1939

The following agreement has been reached between the Ministry of Transport at Prague and the Ministry of Transport at Berlin with regard to the transit of military transports and of members of the armed forces travelling singly over the privileged transit routes:—

(1) German military transports and members of the armed forces travelling singly will be admitted on the transit routes—

- (a) Lundenburg-Pohl-Schönbrunn W.;
- (b) Lundenburg-Brüsa B.-Altsdorf-Lichtenau; and
- (c) Triebitz-Lichtenau.

Czecho-Slovak military transports and members of the armed forces travelling singly will be permitted on the transit routes—

- (a) Č. Trebová-Moravičany L.-Červenka.
- (b) Kyšperk-Ustí n.Orl.-Č. Trebová-Brno-Lundenburg-Kuty.
- (c) Mor. Ostrava-Prerov-Lundenburg-Kuty.

(2) Military transports can be forwarded in complete trains or in sections of privileged transit trains.

(3) The trains with military transports may only halt on foreign territory for urgent technical reasons. Soldiers may not leave the trains.

(4) The locomotives and carriages of the military trains or sections of trains may not be beflagged, decorated or described.

(5) Noisy demonstrations, music and singing are not to be indulged in on foreign territory.

(6) When the regular and emergency time-tables already agreed upon are used, military trains or sections of trains must be announced at least twenty-four hours before their arrival at the first station of the competent local railway administration of the land of transit.

New time-tables must be agreed on in ample time before notice of their

coming into force is given between the railway administrations of the two countries.

(7) Members of the armed forces travelling singly can only carry side-arms.

(8) In other respects the provisions of the agreements mentioned in the preamble and the respective supplementary arrangements shall apply *mutatis mutandis*.

(9) This supplementary agreement will come into force immediately.

For the Ministry of Transport at

Prague:

ING. ERBEN.

For the Ministry of Transport at

Berlin:

FRÖHLICH.

No. 64

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 1.50 p.m.)

No. 3 Telegraphic [C 1247/15/18]

BRUSSELS, January 31, 1939, 12.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 2.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has not yet sent any reply but I learned from the King's Private Secretary, whom I met at dinner last night, that subject of the telegram had been fully discussed at the Palace yesterday morning. Baron Capelle emphasized to me the determination of Belgium to maintain her independence and not again become the battleground of Europe. I said that His Majesty's Government fully sympathised with this very natural feeling. At the same time I could not help feeling that in view of present threat from Germany to Western Europe it was unfortunate that intimate relations with French General Staff had been entirely severed. This was so, he said. He then referred to German guarantee² which was only binding so long as Belgium lent no assistance to any country at war with Germany.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 49.

² For the treaty position of Belgium at this time see Volume III of this Series, No. 325, note 2.

No. 65

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin), to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 3.28 p.m.)

No. 45 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1253/15/18]

BERLIN, January 31, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following are the chief points on the political issues together with my comments.

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the economic points in Herr Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on January 30.

Italy. In my opinion the outstanding feature of the speech was Hitler's declaration of solidarity with Italy in the following terms.

'Let no-one in the world make any mistake as to the resolve which National Socialist Germany has made as far as this friend is concerned. It can only serve the cause of peace if it is quite clearly understood that a war of rival ideologies waged against the Italy of today will once it is launched and regardless of its motives call Germany to the side of her friend.'²

This did not mean that Germany desired war but that as other nations wished to assure themselves a share in the riches of the world common interests required common support.

This statement of policy must necessarily stiffen Italian demands on France.

Great Britain. Appreciation is expressed of the readiness of Mr. Chamberlain to assist in the Munich settlement and he maintained that with the elimination of unscrupulous press propaganda good relations could be quickly re-established. The statement that he believed in a long peace was received with loud applause. The interests of Britain and Germany did not conflict and no German desired to make difficulties for the British Empire.

On the other hand Messrs. Eden, Churchill and Duff Cooper and Ickes are the object of attack, Germany reserving the full right to reply to their criticisms. He stated that broadcasting was being employed against Germany in a campaign of international hate and declared that he would retaliate if broadcasting from certain countries to Germany did not cease.

² Herr Hitler did not actually use the phrase 'of rival ideologies'. See No. 321.

No. 66

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 4.15 p.m.)

No. 47 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 1259/15/18]

BERLIN, January 31, 1939

Following is continuation of my telegram No. 45.¹

Colonies. Considerable prominence is given to the colonial question on grounds of economics and justice. 'The theft of the German colonies was morally an injustice, economically it was utter insanity. The political motives advanced were so mean that one is tempted merely to call them silly.' He also emphasized that Germany has no territorial demands on Great Britain or France except for the restoration of her colonies. This nevertheless was in no sense a problem which would cause a war.

In view of the present economic distress it was only to be expected that Herr Hitler would emphasize the importance of this issue although his statement does not alter the issue.

Jews. In attacking the Jews bitterly on familiar lines Herr Hitler referred to 'the shameful spectacle' of the whole democratic world oozing sympathy

¹ No. 65.

for the Jews but hard-hearted when it came to practical help. In a passage which met with loud applause he declared that if international financial Jewry plunged the world into war the result would be not bolshevism but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.

Church. In vigorously denying that there was any religious persecution in Germany he pointed out that the churches received in 1938 500,000,000 marks in public money and that they were the largest landowners in the State. If they considered that their position was intolerable the N.S. State would be prepared to proceed to disestablishment. Clergy who attacked the State placed themselves beyond the pale whilst those who fulfilled their duties without conflict with the Government would receive full protection. If the cases of individual clergymen were taken up by democratic statesmen it could only be for political reasons.

This agrees with reports which I have received regarding possible confiscation of church property.

The United States. In a brief reference to the United States of America he blamed the Jewish influence as responsible for anti-German feeling, asserted Germany's desire for good relations and for mutual non-interference in internal affairs.

Other Countries. In a friendly reference to Poland he stressed the importance to Europe of the 1934 pact, paid a tribute to Pilsudski and to the Polish attitude during the September crisis. Friendly remarks were also addressed to Hungary and Yugoslavia.

With regard to the Balkan States he said that economic relations were being developed and that it was quite natural that the economic system of these countries and of Germany should be complementary. He noted with satisfaction the tendency of the Scandinavian countries to fight shy of certain articles in the Covenant of the League which involved the danger of war. In South America he rejected the interference of the United States in German economic relations with the Latin Republics.

No. 67

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 1)

No. 48 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1257/15/18]

PARIS, January 31, 1939

The average Frenchman is relieved that Herr Hitler's speech was more moderate than he had feared last week when apprehension was rife about what Herr Hitler would announce. Attention is concentrated on the reference to German help to Italy if the latter is attacked and it is generally remarked that as nobody means to attack Italy this does not mean very much.

Signor Mussolini's speech is awaited with some anxiety, however, as it is felt that his attitude dominates the situation at present; but there is generally a much more hopeful feeling in Paris than for some weeks past.

I went to the monthly luncheon of the 'Figaro' to-day and spoke to several

people there amongst them M. Romier, Comte Wladimir d'Ormesson, M. Pierre Brisson, etc. They all expressed satisfaction with the speech.

M. Romier thinks the Führer's references to Italy very interesting as showing that Herr Hitler considers that Mussolini's attitude at the time of the 'Anschluss' was merely a return for Germany's support during the period of sanctions. The dictators are therefore all square with no necessary obligation on the part of Hitler actively to support the Duce in the latter's claims against France. That this support was wanting has always, as you will remember, been the considered opinion of the French Ambassador at Berlin.

Comte d'Ormesson told me that he wished the chief French and British newspapers could agree to devote somewhat less space and importance to Hitler's speeches in future. It is most unhealthy for him to feel that the whole world is thinking of nothing else.

Comte d'Ormesson will probably develop this suggestion in tomorrow's 'Figaro'.

Most of the above persons agreed that if Count Ciano did not go to Berlin for the speech it was that there was not very much of interest for him to hear.

No. 68

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2)

No. 49 [C 1387/19/18]

PRAGUE, January 31, 1939

My Lord,

In my despatch No. 37¹ of the 24th January I had the honour to report the information given to me by the Chef de Cabinet of the Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding the latter's recent visit to Berlin. From subsequent conversations elsewhere, as well as from a study of the press, I have derived the impression that Dr. Chvalkovsky may perhaps have been subject to greater pressure in Berlin than Dr. Masarik was willing to admit.

2. I was told by a Czech friend, whose information has usually been reliable in the past, that the first thing demanded on the German side was action against the remnants of the old régime and against the Jews. This is, indeed, not incompatible with the article in the 'Essener Zeitung', reported in Berlin Savingram No. 28² of the 23rd January, which Dr. Masarik stated was accurately informed, and such action certainly appears to be now in full swing. I have already reported the suspension of the Legionary paper, the 'Národní Osvobozeny'—a surprising act when it is recalled what the Legionaries have stood for in Czech sentiment for the past twenty years. This has now been followed by the suspension of the 'Hlás Mladych', the newly-started organ of the youth movement of the National Labour party, and all the major organs of the Czech press are now out-rivalling each other in their protestations of friendship for the great neighbour. In this they are only following the lead of M. Beran; but I have been warned by Czech friends

¹ No. 6.

² No. 2.

that the opinions publicly expressed to-day, whether by Czech statesmen or in the press, in no way represent the mind of the people, and this I can well believe, as far as the Bohemian provinces are concerned.

3. The past week again has witnessed further action against the Communists. The press of the 24th January reported a dozen arrests in connexion with an alleged revolutionary plot. Two days later it was reported that a number of Communist trades unions had been dissolved, and on the 29th January that the mandates of the Communist Deputies and Senators throughout the Republic had been annulled by the Higher Administrative Court.

4. On the same day it was reported that the Council of Ministers had approved decrees covering the Bohemian provinces whereby the foundation of trades unions was made dependent on the approval of the Ministry of the Interior, and the foundation of political associations would, as in the case of political parties, require Government sanction. The dissolution of four such associations was ordered at the same time.

5. Legislation against the Jews (see my Savingram No. 31³ of the 30th January) is evidently to follow quickly upon the Berlin visit, but there is a division of opinion among informed and unprejudiced persons as to how far this action is the result of German pressure and how far German pressure is merely alleged as an excuse for action which the Czechs are determined to take for purposes of their own.

6. Certain papers say that the most important subject discussed in Berlin was economic co-operation, and it will have been noted that the first action taken by the Council of Ministers on Dr. Chvalkovsky's return was to refer this matter to the Ministry of Economics. The Minister of Commerce has now himself gone to Berlin, so concrete results may shortly be expected. Rumour has it that the German Government are demanding large deliveries of arms, and it receives certain confirmation from paragraph 4 of the Air Attaché's record of [a] conversation at the General Staff, reported in my despatch No. 51⁴ of to-day's date. The word used to me, however, by Dr. Masarik in this connexion was 'steel'. There are also reports that arrangements are being made for Czech workmen to be employed in Germany, but that, too, requires confirmation.

7. The question of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia was a further subject mentioned in Berlin, and a ministerial committee is shortly to open discussions with the representatives of the minority. The latter's press says that they should reach conclusion by the end of February.

8. There are further indications of the interest taken by the German Government in Germany's mission in this country. Thus a ceremony took place in the Deutsches Haus at Prague on the 28th January when S.S.-Oberführer Dr. Scheel, the Reich Students' Leader, paid a formal visit to the members of the German University. He was solemnly presented with the sword of the German student leaders of 1848, and, in return, presented the banner of the first group of the National Socialist Students' League of

³ Not printed.

⁴ No. 69.

the German University, which had been taken to the Reich for safe keeping in 1933. The ceremony took place in the presence of the German Chargé d'Affaires and Herr Kundt, as well as of representatives of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Interior and Schools, and speeches were made regarding the mission of the German University in Prague, which for six hundred years had been a centre of German culture in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It seems clear that both the German University at Prague and that at Brno are to be centres of the National Socialist crusade, and it is said that the Sudeten Germans of the occupied territories will still be required to patronise them in preference to the universities of the Reich.

9. That Brno is not to be neglected as a centre of National Socialism is also suggested by the appointment of Herr Wolf as German Consul at Brno. This gentleman has till lately been employed in the press section of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Berlin, as expert on Czecho-Slovakia and South-East Europe, and it can hardly be believed that so experienced an official will confine himself to purely consular duties.

10. In Slovakia, too, the drive goes on. The German Evangelical Church are preparing to form a separate institution from the present Evangelical Church in the province which embraces persons of all nationalities. Again, a new Slovak-German society has just been instituted at Bratislava. The president is the notorious Professor Tuka, while the Slovak Minister, Dr. Durcansky, and Herr Karmasin⁵ are vice-presidents. A telegram was sent to Herr Hitler at the opening meeting.

11. So far as Reich Germans resident in Czecho-Slovakia are concerned, I reported in my Savingram No. 30⁶ of the 30th January that the National Socialist party and its branches in this country are now to be allowed to pursue their activities without let or hindrance.

12. It would appear, too, that military matters were not forgotten at the Berlin meeting. At any rate, Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit was quickly followed by a hastily signed agreement permitting German military transports to cross the Moravian corridor (see my despatch No. 44 of the 31st January⁷).

13. The article in the 'Essener Zeitung', referred to in paragraph 2 above, stated that Dr. Chvalkovsky's visit 'on no account took place for the purpose of discussing or of opening the way for any new conceptions of foreign policy', and the article in the 'Prager Tagblatt', reported in my despatch No. 45⁸ of the 30th January, pointed out that no pressure had been exercised on Czecho-Slovakia with regard to her attitude to the League of Nations or the Anti-Comintern Pact. Nevertheless, the visit seems to have given a certain fillip to Czecho-Slovakia's orientation. Since it took place she has recognised General Franco's Government *de jure* and has resigned from the International Commission of the Elbe. I have it on fairly good authority, too, that the forthcoming attitude now being exhibited in her press both towards Hungary and Poland is derived from German suggestion.

⁵ Leader of the German party in Slovakia.

⁶ No. 61.

⁷ No. 63. The despatch was dated January 30.

⁸ Not printed.

14. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

No. 69

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2)

No. 51 [C 1389/15/18]

PRAGUE, *January 31, 1939*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a record of conversation between the Air Attaché and a member of the General Staff on the general European situation.

2. This officer's conclusions as to the significance of Herr Hitler's speech seem to have been reached without a very detailed study of its contents, but his belief that Germany is now making thorough and speedy preparations for a major war is worthy of note. I would also draw attention to Commander [sic] MacDonald's understanding that orders for armaments from Czech armament factories are now being considered if they have not already been placed.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

ENCLOSURE IN No. 69

PRAGUE, *January 31, 1939*

H.M. Minister,

I called on the General Staff this morning and had a long talk with a senior member of the Intelligence branch. I opened the conversation by asking him what he thought of Hitler's speech last night to which he replied that its interest lay as much by what he did not say as by the subjects which he mentioned.

2. He pointed out that for the first time on record Hitler did not speak against Russia. The great significance of this omission should not be overlooked and in his view it meant that some sort of agreement had been reached between Hitler and Stalin. He could not say what this agreement had been but possibly it meant that on Stalin's part he would allow Hitler liberty of action in the South and West of Europe.

3. The General Staff officer also pointed out that neither Poland, the Ukraine nor Hungary had been mentioned and in his view this indicated that a form of alliance probably existed, or was envisaged, between these countries and Germany. If this was the case it was natural that one should look in the speech for the common enemy towards whom this alliance was directed. An indication as to this, he thought, was in Hitler's declaration that he would stand by Mussolini at all costs. He saw great significance in

this attitude and believed that it foreshadowed a demand for French territory by Mussolini. In fact he would not be surprised if Mussolini's speech on February 4 did not endorse this view.

4. If such events were to come about, he asked, would England advise France to give way or would she stand by her to defend French territory or colonies? He himself believed that France was in a very weak condition and would give way to Italian demands if they were backed by the German army. On being questioned as to Czecho-Slovakia's action in the event of such a war he replied that they hoped to remain neutral but he realised that it was a neutrality very favourable to Germany who would be able to benefit by it economically and commercially. In other words the Czechs would have to supply Germany with food and war materials. I understood in fact that orders for armaments from Skoda and/or Zbrojovka (Brünn) were now being considered if they had not already been placed. Only if the war went against Germany would there be any chance of Czecho-Slovakia taking an active part to help the allies.

5. An indication as to Germany's attitude towards Czecho-Slovakia in the event of war could be seen in the recent military railway agreement by which German troops could cross the country freely from North to South. While on this subject, the Staff Officer assured me that there was no doubt at all that Germany was making thorough and speedy preparations for a major war. In answer to a question about German influence in Prague I was informed that it was quite untrue that the Czech army was being reduced in size at German instigation. Preparations had already been made to reduce it to 10 ordinary Divisions and 2 mechanized mobile Divisions (he referred to these two Divisions once as 'Blindé' and once as 'Schnell' Divisions) and no alteration had been made to this programme.

6. In conclusion he remarked that he was very glad to note that Hitler had not referred (except in the past) to Czecho-Slovakia. It meant that no further aggressive measures need be expected from that quarter. It was now the turn of others and in his opinion these others were France and England. France he thought would be menaced by Italy and the English (or ex-German) colonies would be the cause of disagreement with England.

7. He pointed out that it was well known that there was dissatisfaction in Germany but that it would never break out into open rebellion so long as Hitler continued successfully in his role of prophet. He had now said that he must have colonies and there could be no going back on this statement. He would have to have them—and he believed he would get them within the year.

8. Finally he said that the political situation was more serious now than it had ever been before—including last September. At that time there was always the possibility that a war could have been confined to Czecho-Slovakia but now only the Great Powers were left in the arena and any clash must of necessity bring about a major conflict.

A. H. H. MACDONALD
Squadron Leader, Air Attaché

*Letter from Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Sir O. Sargent
(Received February 1)*

[C 1312/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BRUSSELS, *January 31, 1939*

As you will have seen from my telegram No. 3¹ of this morning, I am still waiting for a reply from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the memorandum I left with him on the 29th.

If it has not been fully realised before it will be clear now what a leading part King Leopold plays in the direction of Belgian foreign policy. If you compare Colonel Paris' report of his conversation with the Minister for National Defence, enclosed in my despatch No. 46² of January 24, with the point of view expressed to me yesterday by the King's Private Secretary, you will understand that the drafting of a reply to my communication has probably entailed long discussions between the King and his civilian and military advisers. Baron Capelle left me with the impression that the view of the King was: peace at almost any price; and when he referred to the German guarantee as being only binding so long as Belgium lent no assistance to any country at war with Germany, I asked him whether he really thought that any German guarantee was binding at all; in fact, I should very much like to send him, for the King's perusal, a copy of that admirable memorandum by Kirkpatrick³ which I read in the print.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs had sent out invitations for a tea party this afternoon to the whole Diplomatic Corps. This morning he circulated a letter postponing this for two days, and, as I am still waiting for his reply, I can only suppose that the drafting of this reply is still under discussion.

It would seem from the way that Baron Capelle received my suggestion about staff conversations that the King is opposed to this, possibly on the ground that it is so difficult ever to keep anything secret in Paris; but this is not at all the point of view of the Minister for National Defence, as reported

¹ No. 64.

² Not printed. Colonel Paris reported that General Denis, Minister for National Defence, had told him of a report that the German General Staff had been working on a plan for the rapid invasion of the Netherlands. General Denis thought a German attack on the Netherlands would compel Great Britain and France to declare war, and that Belgium would inevitably come into the war on the Anglo-French side in view of the threat to Belgian security from a German occupation of the Netherlands. General Denis admitted that plans for French assistance had existed prior to the King's Speech and the reorientation of Belgian policy and added, 'Nothing that was stated by the King or in Parliament precluded the perfect liberty of the Minister of National Defence and his General Staff to exchange military information at any time with any Military Attaché.' Such a method was not 'inter-staff conversations'.

³ Not printed. This memorandum of December 5 contained a brief examination of private and public promises made by Herr Hitler and subsequently broken by him. Mr. Kirkpatrick's conclusion was that Nazis and anti-Nazis alike agreed in attaching no importance to Herr Hitler's last declaration that he had no further territorial claims to make in Europe.

by Colonel Paris, and I am afraid that the King is not yet altogether free of the suspicions which he has long felt of the French.

R. H. CLIVE

No. 71

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 18 Telegraphic [N 589/411/38]

WARSAW, February 1, 1939, 4.38 p.m.

My telegram No. 10.¹

I asked the German Ambassador yesterday why Dr. Schnurre had postponed his visit to Moscow. Herr von Moltke confirmed that Schnurre had come to Warsaw where he was dealing with certain commercial negotiations which are to begin in about a fortnight's time but that he had been recalled to Berlin on urgent business. He would however no doubt visit Moscow later.

Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs whom I also asked knew little about the matter beyond the fact that Schnurre had been here and had suddenly returned to Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 16.

No. 72

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 1, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 4 Telegraphic [C 1317/15/18]

BRUSSELS, February 1, 1939, 5.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 3.¹

The Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to me this afternoon the following reply² to my memorandum:—

'I have read with great interest memorandum which Your Excellency kindly communicated to me containing information on the international situation obtained by His Majesty's Government. The Belgian Government are grateful to His Majesty's Government for this communication, which has been attentively studied and will help the Government to follow future events. I need hardly add that I should be most grateful to receive any further information which Your Excellency may be able to give me.

In any case the British Government may be assured that the Belgian Government resolutely maintain the policy of independence which has received the unanimous assent of the country and which is best suited to the situation of Belgium and the interests of Europe.'

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 64.

² For the original French text of this Note, see No. 80, Enclosure 1.

No. 73

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 17 Telegraphic [C 1355/92/55]

WARSAW, February 1, 1939, 7.39 p.m.

My telegram No. 16.¹

I asked M. Beck whether Danzig had been discussed in detail. He replied that it had been decided that for the time being matters should be left as they were though the whole situation would be examined and it was possible that a basis for a general understanding would be found.

I pointed out that it had been agreed that the High Commissioner should remain at Danzig pending the conclusion of negotiations which it was understood were proceeding between Berlin and Warsaw. If however there was no prospect of any such negotiations reaching any result before the Council meet in May it would be difficult to persuade M. Sandler for instance not to insist on the withdrawal of M. Burckhardt. M. Beck said that this of course was for those concerned to decide but he indicated that he would prefer that no decision in this respect should be reached for the present. He admitted that German attitude regarding the High Commissioner was a negative one and that if the elections were held at Danzig this Spring the Gauleiter might be troublesome. He thought however that Herr Hitler would not allow the situation to get out of hand and he felt sure that neither Germany nor Poland would face us with a *fait accompli* or spring any surprise upon us.

As regards his visit to London he felt this would be more useful as an opportunity for resuming contacts with you and other personalities. I would suggest that such a visit might prove useful even apart from the Danzig question.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 74. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

No. 74

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 16 Telegraphic [C 1350/54/18]

WARSAW, February 1, 1939, 7.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 12.¹

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday what he could tell me about his conversations in Warsaw with the German Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. Beck said that Herr von Ribbentrop's visit had practically only reaffirmed what had passed during his visit to Berchtesgaden and Munich. It had been agreed that the German-Polish Pact of 1934 constituted not merely a truce but a basis for a definite stabilization of relations between the

¹ No. 31.

two countries. It had been determined that any misunderstanding should be settled in an amicable manner. Herr von Ribbentrop had repeated that Germany had no intentions of displaying undue activity as regards the Ukraine though she would of course safeguard her economic interests in that direction. Poland's attitude to the anti-Comintern Pact was fully understood as well as her special relations with France. No agreements had been or were likely in the near future to be concluded but M. Beck attached importance to the visit as indicating continuance of German goodwill towards Poland.

2. I will deal with what M. Beck had to say to me about Danzig in a separate telegram.²

3. M. Beck referring to Polish relations with France said that now that the Little Entente had practically ceased to exist he felt that these relations should become more satisfactory. His tone was generally more friendly towards France than I have ever heard from him. The French Ambassador informs me that he has had confirmation of this in a recent conversation with M. Beck and that he wonders whether if M. Beck went to London in connexion with the Committee of Three it might not be politic to invite him to visit Paris on his way there or back.

4. As regards his general discussions with Herr von Ribbentrop M. Beck told me that the French Ambassador has asked what Herr von Ribbentrop had said regarding his Government's attitude in the case of an unprovoked attack by Italy on France. M. Beck had gathered the impression from Herr von Ribbentrop that Italy would not venture to attack France without approval of the Führer and as the latter wished to avoid any complications of a serious nature at the present moment there was no danger of precipitate action by Italy.

Repeated to Berlin.

² No. 73.

No. 75

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 5 Telegraphic [C 1324/15/18]

BRUSSELS, February 1, 1939, 8.43 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Having read the Note I put it down without comment. Minister for Foreign Affairs then proceeded to enlarge on the Belgian policy of independence. He said that he simply could not believe that Germany had contemplated the seizure of Holland. It would be more heinous than the invasion of Belgium in 1914. I said that the American report,² of which he was aware, confirmed our information, although it would appear that during the week before Herr Hitler's speech counsels of prudence had prevailed. But there

¹ No. 72.

² See Nos. 27 and 39.

seemed to be no doubt that the invasion of Holland had been contemplated and might always be again. Belgium might thus find herself isolated among the nations at war and faced with a new and unexpected military problem. I told His Excellency that I had two days ago, in conversation with the King's Private Secretary,³ made personal comment that it seemed unfortunate that close relations with the French General Staff had been entirely broken off. Might I ask again as a personal question what was the view of His Excellency? He said that this question carried him back 18 years to the time when he had negotiated the military agreement with the French. Today however the position was entirely changed. Staff conversations with the French could not possibly be kept secret. I said did he fear leakage in Paris? He said yes and also in this country where knowledge of any such conversations would arouse great opposition in certain quarters. Any arrangement with the French General Staff, whereby French divisions might in certain circumstances at the Belgian request come to the aid of Belgium, must become known. Moreover he did not believe that today France having to defend three frontiers could spare any troops for Belgium. The Belgian Government were therefore convinced that the only chance to maintain their independence and avoid invasion was to have no commitments at all with any country.

Earlier in our conversation His Excellency said he was not quite clear about our proposal for arbitrators in the event of a threat to Holland. I said I understood it to mean that if French and Belgian Governments favoured proposal the three Governments would be ready to suggest a board of neutral arbitrators the moment that the danger threatened and throw on Germany the odium of refusing. His Excellency made no comment on this.

Repeated to Paris.

³ See No. 64.

No. 76

Minute by Sir A. Cadogan

[C 1464/421/62]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 1, 1939*

The French Ambassador called this morning, and in the course of conversation said that the information which his Government had in regard to the anti-Comintern Pact did not coincide with what I had told him the other day about our information.

He read me various telegrams from Berlin, Tokyo and Moscow, the general sense of which was that the Japanese Government had taken the lead in pressing for an extension of the Pact and that the Italian Government had not been enthusiastic.

From the dates of these communications it was evident that the information of the French Government was not necessarily inconsistent with the story as we know it. I told the Ambassador that it was quite true that towards the

end of last year the Italian Government seemed to be hanging back. We had, however, quite recently received the information that the Italian Government had suddenly, early in January, intimated to the German Government that they were now ready to sign a revised Pact. This had been conveyed to the Japanese Government, who were taken unawares and had, so far as I knew, not been able to make up their minds. I thought that this hesitation on their part might be due to the fact that although the Japanese Government would have liked a reinforced anti-Comintern Pact, they were rather doubtful of the value to them of a triple pact of mutual defence against aggression by any third party. I made it clear to the Ambassador that in spite of what he had told me I thought the sources from which we had obtained our information were so reliable that my belief in our version of the story was unshaken.

M. Corbin then went on to speak of the reports of German-Soviet discussions, and I gave him such information as we had on the subject, saying that according to the latest information which I had seen there had been some hitch and that the German delegate had not, so far as I knew, yet proceeded to Moscow. M. Corbin said that it was significant that Herr Hitler did not in his speech, as was his wont, indulge in any attack on the Soviet Government.

I think that these three points taken together, namely, the new form which it is proposed to give the anti-Comintern Pact, the projected German-Soviet conversations and the cessation of attacks on the Soviet may be rather ominous. If we may believe that the Germans have found that their project for acquiring a dominating position in the Ukraine was not so realisable as they had thought, it may well be that they have turned their minds to obtaining a form of economic cooperation with, if not domination of, the Soviet with a view to benefiting from the almost unlimited sources of raw materials which that might put at their disposal. The transformation of the anti-Comintern Pact into a simple pact of mutual assistance against unprovoked aggression by any third party might be designed by the Germans to convince the Soviet Government that they are no longer their chief enemy and that German policy is not directed entirely against the Soviet and all its works. It seems to me that we shall have to watch very carefully the development of any tendency towards a *rapprochement* between Germany and the Soviet.

A. C.

No. 77

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 2)

No. 146 [C 1318/15/18]

PARIS, February 1, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a Note dated February 1 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PARIS, le 1 février, 1939

Par son aide-mémoire du 29 janvier,¹ l'Ambassade d'Angleterre a bien voulu faire part au Gouvernement français des préoccupations qu'inspirent au Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique certaines informations de caractère politique et militaire de nature à faire craindre pour la fin de février une action de force de l'Allemagne contre les Puissances occidentales. L'Ambassade évoquait diverses hypothèses comportant l'éventualité d'une attaque plus ou moins brusquée, précédée ou non d'un ultimatum, qui serait déclenchée par l'Allemagne ou par les autres signataires du pacte anti-komintern.

Se référant plus particulièrement au cas d'une invasion non provoquée des Pays-Bas par l'Allemagne, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique estime qu'en raison de l'importance stratégique de ce pays et de ses colonies, l'attaque allemande devrait être considérée 'comme une menace directe à la sécurité des Puissances occidentales'; il se déclare 'en conséquence disposé à penser qu'il n'aurait d'autre choix que de considérer une invasion allemande de la Hollande comme un *casus belli*, en admettant que la Hollande résiste à l'invasion'.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l'honneur de faire savoir à l'Ambassade d'Angleterre que le Gouvernement français a recueilli de son côté des informations qui lui inspirent des préoccupations analogues à celles du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté. Ces informations, bien que n'ayant pas été jusqu'ici confirmées, donnent en effet à penser que l'action de l'Allemagne, tout d'abord dirigée vers l'Europe orientale, pourrait s'orienter, soit spontanément, soit à l'appui des prétentions italiennes, vers l'Occident, c'est-à-dire vers la Grande-Bretagne, la France, la Belgique, les Pays-Bas et la Suisse. C'est avec la plus grande attention qu'il convient d'observer cette évolution, dont la politique de prestige, la crise économique et financière, les exigences coloniales des deux pays totalitaires pourraient précipiter les conséquences.

Le Gouvernement français estime que le risque auquel sont exposées de ce fait les Puissances occidentales est égal pour toutes ces Puissances et doit être envisagé comme indivisible. Il considère que leur sécurité se trouverait directement menacée, quelle que fût la direction initiale de l'attaque allemande ou italienne contre l'une d'entre elles, et il lui paraît impossible de concevoir une localisation du conflit qui intéresserait nécessairement tout l'ensemble de leurs possessions. Cette situation crée donc en fait une communauté de risque qui doit logiquement entraîner une solidarité de fait en présence de toute attaque non provoquée de l'Allemagne ou de l'Italie.

C'est sous le bénéfice de cette conception générale pleinement partagée par le Gouvernement britannique, que le Gouvernement français pourrait se trouver d'accord avec lui pour considérer dès maintenant comme un *casus belli* l'éventualité d'une invasion de la Hollande, bien que ce fait en lui-

¹ Not printed. This *aide-mémoire* embodied the instructions sent to Sir E. Phipps in No. 40. See also No. 50.

même n'engage aucune responsabilité contractuelle de la France et que l'action solidaire qu'elle aurait à lui opposer aux côtés de la Grande-Bretagne serait, au surplus, de caractère préventif.

Le Gouvernement français tiendrait, d'autre part, à être assuré qu'une invasion de la Suisse, aussi bien qu'une invasion de la Belgique devant constituer également une menace directe à la sécurité des Puissances occidentales, serait, au même titre qu'une invasion de la Hollande, considérée dès maintenant comme de nature à justifier et déterminer la décision envisagée par le Gouvernement britannique.

Enfin le mémorandum britannique ajoute que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté, après avoir soigneusement examiné la situation à la lumière des informations reçues, 'a décidé d'accélérer autant que possible la préparation de ses mesures de défense et de contre-offensive'.

Le Gouvernement français, qui s'impose lui-même aujourd'hui un effort considérable dans tous les domaines pour augmenter et perfectionner ses armements, se félicite de cette décision dont la mise en œuvre constitue, dans les circonstances actuelles, une garantie particulièrement importante de la sécurité commune de l'Europe occidentale. La gravité de la situation, en présence des menaces évoquées dans le mémorandum britannique exige, de la part de toutes les nations intéressées, l'adoption immédiate et sans réserve de toutes mesures susceptibles d'accroître les forces humaines et matérielles dont elles pouvaient déjà disposer. Le Gouvernement français est prêt pour sa part à cette communauté d'efforts et de sacrifices qui, pour faire face à une véritable communauté de responsabilités, donnera à la collaboration franco-anglaise sa pleine efficacité matérielle et morale. A ce double point de vue, le recours à la conscription apparaît un élément essentiel de la participation effective de l'Angleterre à l'organisation de la défense commune sur le Continent.

Les dispositions qui précèdent ont été portées *à titre secret* à la connaissance du Gouvernement belge, comme suite à la communication britannique du 29 janvier.

No. 78

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Bland (The Hague)

No. 8 Telegraphic [C 1112/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 2, 1939, 5.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 2.¹

I shall, of course, be very glad to see M. Patijn when he comes. If he would prefer not to come to the Foreign Office, I could see him in the afternoon of February 14 at the House of Lords, if sitting, or early in the day before office hours at Eaton Square. I should have liked to invite him to lunch, but have an engagement on February 14.

¹ No. 30.

No. 79

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 3)

No. 151 [C 1432/15/18]

PARIS, February 2, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a memorandum by the Military Attaché dated February 1 regarding Germany's aims in Europe.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 79

PARIS, February 1, 1939

The Ambassador

Yesterday I lunched with Colonel de Vitrolles, the head of the Deuxième Bureau of the Air Force. The conversation, needless to say, turned on Hitler's speech, and the views which he expressed were interesting because they gave evidence of an outlook which differs considerably from, and is in some respects broader than that of the Deuxième Bureau in the Ministry of War. He prefaced his remarks by saying that he did not believe that Germany intended war during 1939, either in the west or in the east, but his later conversation showed that none the less he believed that world domination remained the objective of Germanism. The real conflict in the world to-day was not between Germany and the west, but between the Germans and the Slavs, whom the former were determined to exploit economically as a means to the end, namely the German domination of Europe. Any action in the west would only be taken as a preliminary necessity for the attainment of the main objective. At the present time, however, the economic situation in Germany was such as to make war for her a very precarious gamble, and if she did not win a very quick victory she must be defeated. Again, as a result of the events of 1938, Germany's potential enemies had closed their ranks and Germany was faced by the united antagonism of a great proportion of the world. It was probable therefore that 1939 would be a year of great diplomatic activity on the part of Germany, with the object, firstly, of dividing her possible opponents and, secondly, of arriving at some solution of her economic problems which, although it might perhaps only be temporary, might give her the time necessary for her to succeed in her first object. Such a temporary solution might be found in the exploitation of Hungary, and to this he traced the anti-Jewish campaign which was now being encouraged in that country by means of Nazi propaganda. The whole of Hungary's industry was in the hands of the Jews, and if the Jews could be liquidated, Hungary would quickly be reduced to the status of a purely agricultural country, and would become entirely dependent on Germany for her industrial needs. The line which Hitler's proposals in the diplomatic field might be expected to follow was a suggestion for some form of disarmament, or more probably for the stabilisation of armaments at existing levels, coupled perhaps with a demand

for colonies. Success along these lines would also contribute some relief in the economic field, and any suggestion for the stabilisation of armaments at existing levels should be scrutinised very closely since by this means not only would Germany's actual superiority be preserved, but also the fact that her industry was permanently organised for war, combined with the economic relief which would be afforded her, would give her a very great advantage when the armaments race recommenced. By means of proposals which at first sight would appear reasonable, and as a result of the relaxation of tension which would ensue, by 1940 Germany might hope to complicate the issue, so that the front against her would be less united, and the political atmosphere more favourable to the prosecution of her ultimate designs.

As far as colonies were concerned Germany was not really interested in them except as a bargaining counter. In respect to Italy he did not believe that she really meant war, since she was much too vulnerable *vis-à-vis* France for victory to be possible. Her industries and her aerodromes were all in the north or on the coast and entirely exposed to attack by the French. The Assistant Air Attaché tells me that the above represents a complete change of heart on the part of Colonel de Vitrolles, who not long ago appeared convinced that Italy meant business and that 1939 would see her united with Germany against France. He concluded that one of the main objects of western diplomacy for the moment should be to encourage the Slav States to unite, since united they would be able to oppose a resistance to German ambitions which would make it possible for France and Great Britain to assist them. It was the division between the Poles and the Czechs which had made possible the events of September.

It is interesting to compare this view with those expressed by Generals Gamelin and Colson whom I met at lunch to-day. They were at one in affirming that the speech had changed nothing, and that the chances of war in the west in 1939 remained as they had been. The main essential was that France and Great Britain should remain united—the slightest sign of cleavage would be most dangerous.

W. FRASER
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 80

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 6)

No. 68 [C 1502/15/18]

BRUSSELS, February 2, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegrams Nos. 4¹ and 5² of February 1 and previous correspondence on the subject of the position of Belgium in the event of a German invasion of Holland, I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the letter³ which I handed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on January 29

¹ No. 72.

² No. 75.

³ Not printed.

covering the memorandum embodying paragraphs 3 to 14 of your telegram No. 5⁴ of January 28, with the addition of the words given in your telegram No. 6.⁵ I also enclose a copy of the reply⁶ which His Excellency handed to me on February 1.

2. Yesterday Colonel Paris was entertained to dinner by the Minister of National Defence and a record of his conversation with General Denis and with the Chief of the General Staff will be found in the third enclosure⁷ to this despatch.

3. I would especially invite Your Lordship's attention to a comparison of the record of my conversation with M. Janson with that of the Military Attaché's with General Denis.

4. While it is abundantly clear that the King and the Belgian Government are determined to keep Belgium out of war at almost any price, their military advisers although equally imbued with the desire to avoid war are fully alive to the difficulty of doing so in certain eventualities—in fact General Denis considers it would be impossible for Belgium to remain neutral if Holland were invaded.

5. The King and his Minister for Foreign Affairs are afraid of the reactions in Belgium, i.e. especially among the Flemish, should it ever become known that staff conversations were or had been taking place with the French, while of course German knowledge of such conversations—though M. Janson did not allude to this—would be even more dangerous and jeopardise the German guarantee. General Denis and General Van den Bergen on the other hand consider it essential to make plans to meet any emergency and consequently feel that an exchange of information and plans with ourselves and the French is urgently necessary.

6. I feel it would be inopportune to say anything more to the Belgian Government at present, although I am in favour of communicating to the Chief of the General Staff as much information as may be considered advisable. Both he and the Minister of National Defence are extremely friendly and well disposed, and in my opinion take a far more realistic view of the dangers surrounding Belgium than do His Majesty and his civilian advisers.

7. If General Denis holds as strongly to his views as he appeared to do in his conversation with Colonel Paris it may be that, in view of his prestige and the respect in which he is held by the Flemish, these views may finally prevail.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris and to His Majesty's Minister at The Hague.

I have, &c.,
R. H. CLIVE

⁴ No. 40.

⁵ Not printed. This telegram transmitted a correction to the text of telegram No. 5. The correction was made in the telegraphed version of telegram No. 5 printed above as No. 40.

⁶ Enclosure 1.

⁷ Enclosure 2.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN No. 80

M. Janson to Sir R. Clive

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES, BRUXELLES, le 1^{er} février, 1939

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

J'ai lu avec grand intérêt le mémoire par lequel Votre Excellence a bien voulu me communiquer les informations recueillies par le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique sur la situation internationale.

Le Gouvernement du Roi sait gré au Gouvernement anglais de lui en avoir donné connaissance. Cette communication retient toute mon attention; elle aidera le Gouvernement à suivre avec un intérêt minutieux les événements futurs.

J'ai à peine besoin de dire à Votre Excellence que je Lui serais reconnaissant de toute information complémentaire qu'Elle pourrait me faire parvenir.

En tout état de cause, le Gouvernement britannique peut avoir l'assurance que le Gouvernement belge se conformera résolument à la politique d'indépendance qui a reçu l'adhésion unanime du pays et qui reste la plus conforme à la situation de la Belgique et aux intérêts de l'Europe.

Je saisis cette occasion, M. l'Ambassadeur, de renouveler à Votre Excellence l'assurance de ma très haute considération.

Signé: JANSON

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 80

Lt.-Colonel Paris to Sir R. Clive

No. 3

BRUSSELS, February 2, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to report that after dinner last night at General Denis' house, I had a long talk with him followed by a conversation with General Van den Bergen, Chief of the General Staff. They both referred to a possible German invasion of Holland and to the memorandum which you had left with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Sunday, the 29th January.

2. The Minister of National Defence was even more outspoken than in our previous conversation referred to in my despatch No. 1¹ dated the 23rd January, 1939. He said that it would be impossible for Belgium to remain neutral if Holland were invaded, and added that it was essential that new plans should be worked out to meet this possible eventuality. To do so, it would be necessary to consult myself and the French Military Attaché. His statement that Belgium could not remain neutral was based on two considerations. Firstly, that she would be starved out, as neither England nor France would feed her and Germany would not be able to, and, secondly,

¹ This despatch was enclosed in despatch No. 46 from Brussels. See No. 70, note 2.

that the political froth of Independence and Neutrality would be swept away by a wave of popular feeling for the democratic ideal.

3. General Van den Bergen spoke in rather a disappointed manner. He affirmed the urgent need for the exchange of information and plans between himself and the French and British Military Attachés. I agreed and referred to the questionnaire prepared by the Air Ministry in July, 1938.² He immediately answered: 'You will have noticed I have not replied to it, and this despite the fact that I suggested it to you. My hands have been tied. It is very regrettable.' He then added bitterly that politics were a great stumbling block to the Chief of the General Staff, whose duty it was to prepare plans, and even joint plans, for every possible contingency. He considered an invasion of Holland was possible though not probable. The General then gave an instance of the harm that politicians could do. He had recently come to a very frank understanding with General Van Voorst tot Voorst, Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Field Army. He had shown him all the Belgian defences and had arranged for a senior Belgian officer to visit the Dutch defences. Then, Baron Nothomb made a speech in the Belgian Senate advocating close staff contacts with the Dutch. Within 48 hours, the Dutch Ministry of Defence had ordered Colonel Van Voorst Evekink, their Military Attaché in Brussels, not to raise any questions of visits again, or exchange of views under pain of dismissal. Thus, thanks to Parliamentary interference, Dutch susceptibilities had been roused and deadlock reached.

4. I then asked the General what he proposed to do. He said that he had prepared a paper showing the risks that Belgium was running. All he wanted was to be allowed to continue confidential talks with myself and, if necessary, the French Military Attaché. The politicians need know nothing of it and he would not even mention it at the Palace. Thus, if anything came to light they could make him the scapegoat and dismiss him. He added:—'That is one of the risks of my trade, but at least I would know I had done my best to guard against any eventuality.' He referred to his conversations with myself and Wing Commander Davis and said that even General Duvivier, the Chief of the Air Staff, was ignorant of their tenour. He had mentioned them to General Denis, but only because he was a life-long friend and a soldier.

He would not mention such conversations to a civilian Minister of National Defence nor to the Palace group, whose optimistic and excessively neutral attitude he did not understand and thought to be rather unreal.

5. I have outlined these conversations at length for they go to confirm an opinion, which I have always been inclined to hold, that the Minister of National Defence and General Van den Bergen have views on the interpretation of Belgian policy which differ vividly from those held by the Government and the Palace. I feel sure they will not hesitate to put their views forward. In the meantime, our only hope of close staff contacts lies in the personality of General Van den Bergen himself. I venture to suggest that it would be unfair to him and fatal to our future relations if we were to refer to

² Not printed.

any contacts and conversations that I have had with him to anyone else in Belgium.

I have, &c.,
D. K. PARIS
Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 81

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 25 Telegraphic [C 1474/16/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 3, 1939, 2.45 p.m.*

1. In view of general position His Majesty's Government have reached the following conclusions about the future conduct of conversations between the British and French General Staffs:—

(a) Conversations should proceed on the basis of war against Germany and Italy in combination and should be extended in scope to include all likely fields of operation, especially the Mediterranean and the Middle East. (While probability of Japanese intervention should not be ignored, it should be assumed that Japan would be influenced by her existing commitments in China and by fear of Soviet Russia and the United States of America, and would be likely to adopt a cautious attitude, at any rate at the outset of any emergency in the near future.)

(b) These Staff conversations would result in the formulation of specific joint plans, both as regards military operations and in the sphere of supplies;

(c) Periodical liaison of a regular nature with the French Staff would be necessary to keep up to date the plans referred to in (b) above.

2. Chiefs of Staff have been invited to survey and report upon the whole position forthwith with a view, if French Government agree, to our being in a position at an early date to undertake conversations with the French General Staff on the wider basis now proposed.

3. Please inform the French Government accordingly, and enquire whether they would be prepared to give similar instructions to their General Staffs. You should insist on the extreme importance of keeping the present communication absolutely secret and on grave embarrassment which would be caused to His Majesty's Government if there were any leakage. If we were ever asked any questions on the subject, we should propose to say that we were merely continuing conversations initiated some time ago.

4. French Government's memorandum of February 1 (your despatch No. 146¹) and the issues raised in it will receive urgent consideration by His Majesty's Government who will communicate their views in due course.

¹ No. 77.

No. 82

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 4, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 1472/92/55]

DANZIG, February 3, 1939, 8.16 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 17¹ to Foreign Office.

Herr Bassler, of German Foreign Office, who is visiting Danzig, informs my American colleague, whom he knows well, that on January 21 Field-Marshal Göring presided at a meeting attended by Hess, von Ribbentrop, and others, but not Herr Forster although he wished to be present, at which it was decided that any question of a change in status of Danzig was to be excluded from topics for discussion by von Ribbentrop at Warsaw.

2. Herr Bassler added that during political restlessness last October and November it was believed that colonial question would remain in abeyance for some considerable time until Germany had consolidated her position but it now seemed likely that it would receive early consideration.

3. On January 30 my German colleague volunteered opinion to me that whether it were this year, next year or even a little later Germany would soon recover her colonies without war.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ No. 73.

No. 83

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 7 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1729/15/18]

WARSAW, February 6, 1939

I asked the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day whether there were any fresh developments as regards the situation in the Carpatho-Ukraine, and whether Poland still intended to endeavour to secure a common frontier with Hungary. M. Arciszewski referred me to M. Beck's statement in a reply to a Parliamentary Question (see my telegram No. 4 Saving¹) and said that Poland still hoped to secure a common frontier. As I also knew, Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop had given Poland assurances that they had no intention of displaying undue activity in that region and the Polish Government had recently received a concrete confirmation of the truth of this statement. German activity in Carpatho-Ukraine had to a great extent ceased, and whereas in December some nervousness was felt here as to German intentions, it was now felt that there was no danger of a German drive in that direction in the near future. It was true that Ukrainian propaganda was still being organised in Vienna, but he felt that this was directed chiefly against the Russian Ukraine and not against Eastern Galicia, where there were

¹ Not printed.

fewer signs of attempts at subversive activities from across the Ruthenian frontier, which in any case was now closed. It was further satisfactory that the Czech authorities were now taking serious measures to pacify the Ruthenian districts.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 84

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 8 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1730/92/55]

WARSAW, February 6, 1939

My telegram No. 7 Saving.¹

I tried to extract more information today from the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding the position between Germany and Poland in regard to Danzig, and what had passed during Herr von Ribbentrop's conversations here. M. Arciszewski confirmed what M. Beck had already told me and expressed the opinion that it was unlikely that any negotiations would take place or at least be completed before the League Council meets again. He said that the Reich appeared to be content to leave matters at Danzig as they are and under these circumstances M. Beck had not felt it politic to propose any changes in the situation there.

2. I pointed out to M. Arciszewski, as I had already to M. Beck, that this would place the Committee of Three in a somewhat embarrassing position. It had been decided to postpone any decision regarding the High Commissioner pending the result of negotiations which it now appears would not take place in the near future. While Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop might have given assurances that no surprise would be sprung upon us, one could never be certain that the Gauleiter, Herr Forster, might not, in connexion with the elections, for instance, take some action which would render the High Commissioner's position still more intolerable. I quoted the recent case of the 500 Jews who are now leaving Danzig for Palestine as an instance of the difficulties with which the League have to contend under present circumstances. M. Arciszewski agreed and promised to think over this question.

3. I further told M. Arciszewski that there were various rumours current regarding the communications across the Corridor between the Reich and Danzig and asked whether any agreement was likely to be reached on this point. M. Arciszewski stated that of course there could never be any question of a corridor across the Corridor, or any extra-territorial arrangement, but that it was possible that the road between Chojnice and Tczew would be improved. Some time ago Germany had suggested that a direct road to Danzig further to the north should be constructed, but the Polish Government had refused to entertain this proposal. It further was not intended that any modifications of frontier formalities should be made. The

¹ No. 83.

reconstruction of this road required in any case the sanction of the military authorities, which had not yet been given.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 85

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 9 Saving: Telegraphic [N 735/411/38]

WARSAW, February 6, 1939

My telegram No. 7 Saving.¹

I asked the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs how the commercial negotiations with the Soviet Union were proceeding. M. Arciszewski told me that it was hoped that they would be concluded this week. The agreement would provide for a trade amounting to some 65 million zloté both ways, and Poland would accept imports of cotton, manganese and other raw materials, while Poland would send to Russia up to a million tons of coal, and also steel, iron and other manufactured products.

2. I asked him whether he had heard anything more about the reasons for Herr Schnurre's hurried return to Berlin from here, but he had no information on the subject. He understood that the Soviet Government were much annoyed with Poland in this connexion as they thought that there had been intrigues here to prevent any commercial negotiations between the Soviet Union and Germany, though there was of course no truth in this supposition. M. Arciszewski further told me that the commercial negotiations with Germany which are to begin about the middle of this month are of minor importance and chiefly concern transfers and so forth.

Repeated to Berlin and Moscow.

¹ No 83.

No. 86

Letter from Mr. Strang to Mr. Mack¹ (Paris)

[C 804/17/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 6, 1939

The French memorandum about the international guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia enclosed in your despatch No. 89² of the 19th January stated that the French Government were prepared to accept any form of guarantee to which the Czecho-Slovak Government agreed.

This is rather a different view from that expressed to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State by the French Ministers in Paris on January 10,³ when they indicated that they wanted a joint guarantee by the four Munich Powers, which would only come into play if three of the four guaranteeing

¹ First Secretary in H.M. Embassy at Paris.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 552.

³ See Volume III of this Series, No. 496.

Powers were in agreement. It therefore seemed to us a little strange that the French memorandum of January 18, instead of restating this view, took the different line summarised above. Possibly the explanation of this apparent change in the French Government's attitude lies in the statement in paragraph 2 of their memorandum that the Czechs do not care what the terms of the guarantee are provided that they get the principle.

We should be glad if you would clear up this point and confirm that the official French view is as stated in their note of January 18 rather than as stated to the British Ministers by the French Ministers on January 10.

WILLIAM STRANG

No. 87

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Mallet (Washington)

No. 64 Telegraphic [C 1474/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 7, 1939, 10.15 a.m.

My telegram No. 44.¹

Please communicate the following to the State Department for the personal and confidential information of the President.

(1) His Majesty's Government have now given further consideration to this question and have reached the following conclusions:

(a) His Majesty's Government confirm the view expressed in paragraph 4 of my telegram under reference as to the threat that any German attack on Holland would constitute to the security of the Western Powers, and consider that in the event of a German invasion of Holland they would be obliged to go to war with Germany.

(b) In addition, they consider that any attempt by Germany to dominate Holland by force or threat of force would also have to be regarded as a menace to the security of this country.

(c) A German attack on Switzerland would also be clear evidence of an attempt by Germany to dominate Europe by force and from this point of view a German attack on Holland and an attack on Switzerland were in the same category. Consequently if the French Government should enquire whether if Germany invaded Switzerland and France thereupon declared war upon Germany we should go to the assistance of France our answer should be in the affirmative.

(2) In view of the general position His Majesty's Government have decided to continue staff conversations with the French Government on broader lines than hitherto and to extend their scope.

(3) His Majesty's Government are further considering making a public statement about their attitude in regard to the Netherlands, which, without being so specific as the conclusions summarised above, would make plain that our interest in both the Netherlands and Belgium is so vital as to pass beyond legal obligations and that His Majesty's Government would therefore be

¹ No. 41.

bound to regard as affecting interests which are vital to the security of this country any attempt to infringe or compromise the full independence and integrity of the two countries.

No. 88

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Mallet (Washington)

No. 65 Telegraphic [C 1474/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 7, 1939, 11.0 a.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. The following message should also be communicated to the State Department for the personal and secret information of the President.

2. His Majesty's Government have now received the replies of the French and Belgian Governments and some indication of the views of the Netherlands Government.

3. The French reply² states that their reports, although not confirmed, are similar to those received by His Majesty's Government and afford some justification for fears of German action towards the west either spontaneously or in support of Italian claims. The French Government consider that the Western Powers are all equally threatened whatever the initial direction of a German or Italian attack and that this community of risk should logically entail a real solidarity in the face of any unprovoked attack by Germany or Italy. On this understanding the French Government would agree with His Majesty's Government in considering the contingency of an invasion of Holland as a *casus belli*, although they point out that this would not involve any contractual responsibility on the part of France and that her joint action with Great Britain would be of a preventive character. The French Government have also requested an assurance that His Majesty's Government would regard an invasion of Switzerland in the same light as an invasion of Holland. The French reply finally welcomes His Majesty's Government's decision to accelerate their defensive and counter-defensive measures, and suggests that conscription appears essential for effective British participation in the organisation of common defence on the continent. The French Government have also communicated the above views secretly to the Belgian Government. The French reply is now being considered by His Majesty's Government.

4. The Belgian reply³ expresses gratitude for His Majesty's Government's message, and asks for any similar information in future, but the only view expressed is that the Belgian Government resolutely maintain their policy of independence, which they claim to be unanimously approved in Belgium, and to be best suited to the situation of Belgium and to the interests of Europe. When communicating this reply, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he could not believe that Germany contemplated the seizure of

¹ No. 87.

² See No. 77.

³ See Enclosure 1 in No. 80.

Holland, but in any event the Belgian Government were convinced that their only chance to maintain independence and avoid invasion was to have no commitments at all with any country.

5. On receipt of a telegram from the Netherlands Minister in Washington reporting his conversation with President Roosevelt on January 26, the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs asked His Majesty's Minister at the Hague whether His Majesty's Government could confirm the President's information.⁴ His Majesty's Minister, on instructions from His Majesty's Government, informed Dr. Patijn on January 30⁵ that some of the many reports received by His Majesty's Government suggested that Herr Hitler was considering an attack on the Western Powers in the near future and that his plans might involve the occupation of Holland. Sir N. Bland explained that His Majesty's Government could not vouch for the reliability of any of these reports, but in view of their number it would not be safe to ignore them and His Majesty's Government were therefore carefully considering the position. Dr. Patijn informed Sir N. Bland that he was satisfied that there were no German troop movements against Holland at the moment, but he added that his latest information had not reassured him. He indicated that if the worst came to the worst, the Dutch would defend their front line defences as long as possible and then fall back and let in water. They were about to spend 10 million florins to strengthen the frontier and he estimated the period of possible resistance at 3 to 4 days. Dr. Patijn is visiting London on February 14 for the Grotius anniversary celebrations and I hope to have a conversation with him then.

⁴ See No. 27.

⁵ See No. 57.

No. 89

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 8, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 26 Telegraphic [C 1681/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 8, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

In accordance with message received from the Central Department,¹ I enquired today of the competent official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to the progress in the execution of German-Czecho-Slovak Option Agreement.²

He said that it was difficult to give precise information at this stage because final date by which optants had to make the necessary declarations was March 29 and many had not yet decided whether to opt or not. The Government were constantly receiving requests for advice but this they refused to give lest they be accused of intervening in German affairs. Unofficially,

¹ This telephone message was an enquiry for fuller details about the working of the Optants Agreement. The enquiry was made in view of questions on the subject in Parliament during the debates on the Czecho-Slovak Loan Bill. See also No. 107.

² For the text of this Agreement see Volume III of this Series, Appendix V, Document (v).

however, it was being suggested to enquirers that unless they were being maltreated in their present homes and had found openings in Czecho-Slovakia they would be well advised to stay where they were.

Informant did not anticipate any further mass immigration. That had stopped since conditions of the Czechs in occupied territories had improved. Acts of vengeance which had only been too frequent a few months ago had largely ceased since the Reich authorities had established control. The chief difficulty now was in connexion with land. The Germans were proposing to revise the Czecho-Slovak Land Reform Act so that all those who owned land as result of that Act were threatened with losing it. Moreover where land had been abandoned the German authorities had put in Commissioners. All these questions were, however, being amicably discussed by the competent Mixed Commissions. There were two of these in being, one to deal with all questions affecting minorities, the other specifically with option questions. In general, co-operation with the German authorities had lately become much easier especially since Minister for Foreign Affairs' recent visit to Berlin.

So far as German minority in Czecho-Slovakia was concerned, informant anticipated as result of Herr Kundt's advice³ few would opt, except a few engineers etc. whom Germany required.

³ See Volume III of this Series, No. 413, in which Mr. Newton reported that Herr Kundt had given a press interview advising members of the German minority not to exercise their right of option.

No. 90

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 8, 9.0 p.m.)

No. 58 Telegraphic [C 1675/17/18]

BERLIN, February 8, 1939, 6.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 35 Saving.¹

French Ambassador has concurred in the terms of my proposed communication which is accordingly being sent off today to the German Government. He is taking similar action.

Copy of communication goes to you by bag.²

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 42.

² Sec No. 91.

No. 91

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 11)

No. 174 [C 1780/17/18]

BERLIN, February 8, 1939

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit

to him a copy of a *note verbale* of February 8 to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding a guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.

No. 54

ENCLOSURE IN No. 91

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 8, 1939*

In the Annex to the Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938, it is stated that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government stood by their offer in regard to an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czecho-Slovak State against unprovoked aggression and that the German and Italian Governments would, after the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities had been settled, for their part give a guarantee to Czecho-Slovakia.

2. In the view of His Majesty's Government, the time has now come to regularise the guarantee in question in accordance with the Annex referred to above and His Majesty's Government assume that with the settlement of the Polish-Hungarian minority question, the German Government are of the same opinion. The question of the guarantee was discussed with Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in Rome on January 12.¹ Signor Mussolini's general view was that before a guarantee could be considered, three questions would have to be settled, namely,

- (1) the internal constitution of Czecho-Slovakia itself;
- (2) the establishment of her neutrality, and
- (3) the demarcation of her frontiers on the ground as hitherto they had only been shown on maps.

When these conditions were fulfilled Signor Mussolini thought that a guarantee might be considered but in the meantime owing to the actions of Germany and Italy, it was believed that Central Europe would remain quiet.

3. His Majesty's Government would now be glad to learn the views of the German Government as to the best way of giving effect to the understanding reached at Munich in regard to the guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 500, section (3).

No. 92

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 10)

No. 27 [C 1754/54/18]

WARSAW, *February 8, 1939*

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that the superficial improvement in Polish-German relations which was to be expected from M. Beck's visit to Berchtesgaden and Herr von Ribbentrop's visit here has not so far been reflected in any lessening of the national minority grievances on either side. The complaints of the German minority in Poland were restated in a memorandum presented to the Polish Prime Minister by Senator Hasbach, the chairman of the Council

of Germans in Poland, on the 18th January. This document recalled the promises made by General Slawoj-Skladkowski in response to the similar and comprehensive *démarche* by Senators Hasbach and Wiesner on the 18th October last (see my despatch No. 373¹ of the 15th November, 1938), and expressed strong disappointment at the negligible improvement since that time. He had, he complained, held many discussions with the Polish authorities of various ministries, who only too often said it was a matter of reciprocity and that a satisfactory solution depended on better treatment of the Polish minority in Germany. In conclusion, Senator Hasbach appealed to the Premier to bring about a solution of German minority grievances at the earliest possible moment.

2. The Polish authorities and press, particularly in Silesia, have not been slow to take up the challenge implied in this memorandum. Fairly frequent complaints are made of the expulsion or persecution of Poles in Germany and specially of the inadequate educational facilities enjoyed by them there. On the 20th January, in the course of a debate on foreign affairs in the Budget Committee of the Diet, the Vice-Marshall of the Diet, M. Surzynski, expressed disappointment that the hopes of the improvement of Polish-German relations inspired by the Minorities Declaration of the 5th November, 1937,² were not justified by the present situation of the Polish minority in Germany, which he significantly described as 'disquieting'. Finally, on the 23rd January, a comprehensive interpellation on the ill-treatment of Poles in Germany and Danzig was put forward in the Diet by Senator Lubelski. This drew attention to the persecution of those using the Polish language in Germany, even in church services; to the educational disabilities of the Polish minority; to the deportation into the interior of Germany of lay and clerical Polish leaders; and to economic persecution carried on by dismissing work-people, depriving Poles of their land holdings in virtue of the 'Erbhofsgesetz',³ &c.

3. While the policy of the two Governments is clearly one of mutual understanding, at any rate for the present, it is obvious to any observer here that there is a deep antipathy between the two peoples. I recently met Senator Hasbach and he struck me as a very moderate and reasonable person, but Germans in Warsaw do not conceal their disapproval of the policy of their Government in not defending more energetically the injured rights of their minority. On the Polish side also there is among all sections of opinion a growing dislike and apprehension of Germany's methods, and even the Vilna newspaper 'Slowo', which has previously been blinded by the alleged Russian menace to almost every other consideration, has greatly altered its

¹ Not printed.

² This declaration stated that the German and Polish Governments had held friendly discussions on the position of the German minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Germany, and had reached agreement on the principles which they would adopt in the treatment of minority questions.

³ The 'farm inheritance law' of 1933, which laid down the principle of primogeniture, instead of the division of property among all children, for medium-sized farms, and which forbade the owner to sell or mortgage the land.

tone. The disgraceful treatment of Polish Jews in Germany has had a considerable influence in this respect. There can be little doubt that the Polish authorities are no less active than they ever have been in whittling away and undermining the position of the German minority, and it is undoubtedly the policy of the Polish Government not to put a stop to this process (even if it were able, which is not certain) until better treatment is secured for the Polish minority in Germany. It is significant that several cases of the retaliatory expulsion of Germans from the frontier zone have been published lately.

4. The minority question is not in the front rank at present. Both sides are agreed on that, and larger political questions obviously have pride of place. But there is here a source of discord which either side could at any time magnify into a live issue if it wished, and I have, therefore, thought it well to draw your Lordship's attention to it.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 93

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 85 Telegraphic [C 1727/15/18]

ROME, February 9, 1939, 9.35 p.m.

My Belgian colleague tells me that shortly after meeting of Fascist Grand Council he had a conversation with German Ambassador here. The latter had been rather reassuring and said he considered Herr Hitler had meant what he stated in his speech, namely, that we could look forward to a long period of peace. My Belgian colleague enquired what view German Ambassador took of Italian claims. German Ambassador answered that these had not yet been formulated and he himself did not believe that they were likely to be excessive. He expressed regret that French Government had not taken advantage of suggestion contained in Italian Note¹ declaring that 1935 Agreements were not in force and that Italian Government were nevertheless ready to talk as he felt sure that Italians would be prepared to start conversations. German Ambassador concluded by saying that he thought both he and his Belgian colleague could sleep soundly and not be disturbed in their slumbers by fear of war. I pointed out to Belgian Ambassador that while this seemed a satisfactory conversation I doubted whether German Ambassador himself would be fully informed either of German or Italian plans. Belgian Ambassador agreed.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 482.

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 9, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir A. Cadogan on February 6 and read to him a telegram from M. Bonnet dealing with the situation that would be created by a German attack on the West and with the attitude that the French and British Governments should adopt. The French Government had considered the different forms which an attack might take and the various dispositions that would have to be taken to meet it. They knew what Great Britain would do in the case of a German-Italian attack, but the case might not present itself in so simple a fashion. There might be an Italian attack on France in which Italy would receive indirect and covert assistance from a nominally neutral Germany. Such an eventuality had not been provided for in the framework of Franco-British co-operation. The French Government did not believe that Italy could contemplate an attack on France unless she was assured of indirect assistance at least from Germany.

2. The burden of M. Bonnet's telegram seemed to be that the best hope of preventing any German-Italian aggressive action was to emphasise Anglo-French solidarity.

3. M. Corbin admitted that a good deal of this telegram had been rendered out of date by the reply given by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on February 6,¹ at which he expressed the utmost gratification.

4. He went on to read a telegram from M. François-Poncet in Rome showing that the Italian Government were misinterpreting the Prime Minister's speech of January 31² and my speech at Hull on February 3³ as an indication that His Majesty's Government endorsed, or at least did not oppose, Italian claims on France. As he had told me that morning, they had seized particularly on the words 'Peace based on justice'. In the Italian view 'justice' would seem to call for an attack on another country in order to enforce claims which in Italian eyes were just. M. Corbin recalled that I had that morning mentioned to him the possibility of sending a message to Count Ciano making the attitude of His Majesty's Government quite clear on this point, and M. Corbin expressed the hope that such a message might be sent. I have, however, since decided that for the present the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on February 6 will suffice.

¹ In reply to a question in the House of Commons on February 6, Mr. Chamberlain said 'It is impossible to examine in detail all the hypothetical cases which may arise, but I feel bound to make plain that the solidarity of interest, by which France and this country are united, is such that any threat to the vital interests of France, from whatever quarter it came, must evoke the immediate co-operation of this country.' See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 343, col. 623.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, cols. 37-41.

³ Lord Halifax had expressed His Majesty's Government's concern at the state of Franco-Italian relations.

5. In conclusion M. Corbin enquired whether a reply to the Note⁴ which M. Bonnet handed to Your Excellency on the subject of Holland might be expected in the near future. Sir A. Cadogan told M. Corbin that the Note had been carefully considered and a reply drafted and submitted to me. He thought that the French Government would receive the reply very shortly. M. Corbin alluded to the reference made in M. Bonnet's Note to conscription, and he made little concealment of the fact that in his personal view this reference had been mistaken. Sir A. Cadogan told him that he thought that our reply would not deal with that question. Evidently it was one that could not be satisfactorily answered at short notice. Sir A. Cadogan said that he was aware that the French Government were anxious about the degree of assistance to be expected from us on land, and he could assure him that the matter was being very carefully reviewed. It might be that we should be able to say something before very long to the French Government, but they must not expect an immediate answer. Sir A. Cadogan took the occasion to remind the Ambassador that our supremacy at sea involved the maintenance of much larger numbers in our fleet than in the French fleet and that we were building up an Air Force which already, so far as he knew, outnumbered that of the French.

6. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Berlin, Rome, Brussels, The Hague and Berne.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

⁴ Enclosure in No. 77.

No. 95

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 16)

No. 186 [C 1997/17/18]

BERLIN, February 9, 1939

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a *Note verbale* of February 8 from the French Embassy to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding a guarantee for Czechoslovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 95

No. 78

Note Verbale¹

Aux termes de l'annexe No. 1 à l'Accord signé à Munich le 29 Septembre 1938, les Gouvernements allemand et italien se sont déclarés disposés à s'associer à une garantie internationale des nouvelles frontières de l'État tchécoslovaque contre toute agression non provoquée, lorsqu'aurait été réglée la question des minorités polonaise et hongroise en Tchécoslovaquie.

¹ The text of this Note is printed in the French Yellow Book 'Documents diplomatiques, 1938-1939', Paris, 1939, No. 47.

Se référant à cette déclaration, ainsi qu'aux indications récemment données à Rome par M. Mussolini au Premier Ministre britannique quant aux conditions préalables auxquelles le Gouvernement italien subordonnerait, en ce qui le concerne, la prise en considération de l'octroi de cette garantie, le Gouvernement français, soucieux de donner une suite effective à toutes les dispositions de l'Accord de Munich, attacherait du prix à connaître les vues du Gouvernement du Reich sur la question de la garantie visée par ledit Accord.

L'Ambassade de France serait reconnaissante à l'Office des Affaires Étrangères du Reich de bien vouloir la mettre le plus tôt possible à même de satisfaire au désir ainsi exprimé par son Gouvernement.

No. 96

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 14)

No. 64 [C 1871/7/12]

PRAGUE, February 9, 1939

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of despatch No. 1 of January 31 from H.M. Consul at Bratislava reporting an interview with the Slovak Prime Minister, Dr. Tiso.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 96

Mr. Pares to Mr. Troutbeck

No. 1

BRATISLAVA, January 31, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to state that today I paid my official call on Dr. Tiso, the Slovak Prime Minister. He received me in a friendly way and I remained with him for about twenty minutes.

2. His manner is direct and simple and his opinions are expressed clearly and with conviction. Speaking of the present position of Slovakia he professed himself content with the new boundaries. 'We are a small people', he said, 'and must devote our energies to the building up of the territory which we possess.' In view of the recent outburst of irredentism in Slovakia this declaration coming from the Prime Minister is of great importance. It is true that Dr. Tiso is a priest, an experienced politician and a man of responsible position. His opinions are probably not held by younger Slovaks with more impulsiveness and less experience. I have received the impression that interest in the large Slovak minority in Hungary is very strong here among men of every opinion. The gathering of the Hungarian Slovaks at Nove Zamky on February 12 to celebrate the foundation of the Slovak people's party in Hungary is sure to be made the occasion for some demonstrations of sympathy by young people from this side of the border. But nevertheless Dr. Tiso is the spokesman of the Government and his influence at present is probably more important than anything else.

3. Speaking of the German and Hungarian minorities in Slovakia Dr. Tiso drew a distinction between the position of these two minorities. The fact that there is a large Slovak minority in Hungary renders the Slovak Government liable to have pressure put upon it to extort concessions for the Hungarian minority here, whereas in Germany the Slovaks have no such hostage. I inferred that Dr. Tiso meant to convey that whilst the Slovak Government is prepared to grant every legitimate wish of its minorities it can act more independently in regard to the Germans.

4. Dr. Tiso betrayed some of his old impatience when he mentioned the state of affairs under the previous régime. It is evident that although the situation in Slovakia has changed and an improvement in Slovak-Czech relations is discernible, a certain amount of inward irritation against the Czechs still persists.

5. Dr. Tiso also spoke in general terms about his policy with regard to foreign capital. He promised equality of treatment and said that Germany would not be granted any special privileges. So far as goodwill towards British capital is concerned it is worth noting that in certain negotiations now proceeding with a large British undertaking here the Slovak authorities have shown the wish to help as much as they can.

I have, &c.,
P. PARES

No. 97

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 14)

No. 65 [C 1872/7/12]

PRAGUE, February 9, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a despatch from His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava enclosing a memorandum on the political situation in Slovakia.

2. Mr. Pares's general impression is that, while great economic difficulties lie ahead, the tendency in Slovakia is now in the direction of moderation, and that, disillusioned by the attitude of their foreign neighbours, the responsible elements in the Slovak Government are turning towards Prague. His observations on the attitude of the German minority are of particular interest, and perhaps in some way justify the scepticism felt by the Czechs under the Benes régime as to the utility of generosity towards the Henlein party.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

ENCLOSURE 1 IN No. 97
Mr. Pares to Mr. Troutbeck

No. 2

BRATISLAVA, February 3, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava presents his compliments to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Prague, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum dated the 3rd February respecting the political situation in Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 97

Memorandum on the present Political Situation in Slovakia

BRATISLAVA, February 3, 1939

In order to grasp the present position in Slovakia and estimate the strength of the various influences which are likely to affect developments in the near future it is necessary to review the tendencies of Slovak politics since 1918.

2. It seems to be indisputable that the Slovaks were promised and therefore expected to receive a certain degree of autonomy within the Czecho-Slovak State. But the Czech statesmen who made these promises failed to keep them, and the Prague Government began a policy of centralisation which was the very reverse of these undertakings. In addition to the Slovaks' natural exasperation caused by the feeling that they had been duped there was a further important source of disagreement between Czechs and Slovaks in the former's violent anti-clericalism which they endeavoured to introduce even into Slovakia. The majority of the Slovaks, who are a very pious and Catholic people, were extremely displeased and shocked. The only section which maintained friendly relations with the Czechs were the members of the fairly numerous Slovak-Lutheran Church, who regard themselves as having been the leaders of Slovak nationalism under the Hungarian régime. They sympathised with the traditions of the Czech people and had more understanding for their anti-ecclesiastical tendencies. In Slovakia they were the chief promoters of the 'Czecho-Slovak' idea and became responsible for the execution of the centralising policies of Prague.

3. Unfortunately, tactlessness in religious matters persisted and the narrow-minded selfishness of the Czech political parties, which were transplanted to Slovakia, led them to make a practice of filling even such insignificant posts such [*sic*] as that of a janitor or railway porter with Czechs on the ground that no suitable Slovaks were available. After twenty years of great progress in education it was unwise to continue to employ this old pretext and to pay no heed to the growth of general dissatisfaction, which only increased the strength of the opposition headed by Father Hlinka.

4. This party, in its search for allies, found the Governments of three neighbouring nations only too pleased to render assistance. The Slovaks never seem to have entertained the anti-German bias which is characteristic of the Czechs. Their relations with the Germans were friendly, but not very

close and mainly cultural. To Hungary they are bound by many ties of tradition and culture. For Poland also as a Slav and Catholic sister nation they have strong natural sympathies whilst a similarity of language constitutes another bond. With all these countries it would have been easy for the Slovaks to have established good relations permanently.

5. But no sooner had Slovak autonomy been won than the Slovaks were disillusioned. The Poles, whose main object in assisting the Slovaks seems to have been to weaken the Czechs so that they could take their revenge for the seizure of Teschen after the war, suddenly made totally unexpected demands for the cession of portions of Slovak territory. They behaved with the greatest roughness to the inhabitants of these ceded areas just as in the Teschen district, and completely alienated Slovak sympathy. Even the 'Slovak' organ of M. Sidor, who at one time was extremely friendly to Poland, was publishing anti-Polish articles last December. The behaviour of the Hungarians was even worse. The Slovaks in the territory which they acquired were very numerous and were in many cases brutally mishandled as eye-witnesses in Bratislava could testify. And as if this was not enough, the Hungarian so-called volunteers perpetually harried the Slovak frontier guards and caused a large number of incidents. By the middle of December the patience of the Slovaks and their Government was nearly exhausted and people of all shades of opinion were demanding that a plebiscite should be held in the areas just ceded.

6. The attitude of the Germans has been rather more subtle, but it is not yet apparent that the Slovaks are to derive any substantial benefits in recompense for their friendliness towards the Reich. Practically every legitimate demand of the 'Deutsche Partei' appears to have been granted. The party is allowed to display its flag everywhere, although it is almost identical with the Reich flag. Meetings of the German party are conducted like Nazi celebrations and would be indistinguishable from them except for one or two flags in the Slovak colours which are usually carried. The German salute, uniforms, the Horst Wessel song, all the essential forms in which Nazi culture is wont to express itself, are allowed without restriction. In every speech Ing. Karmasin, leader of the party, never fails to observe that Bratislava remains outside Germany because it is Hitler's will, and that nothing can happen here without his initiative and approval. Leaflets are being distributed advising Germans that whilst they are entitled to opt for German citizenship they are not to do so. A whispering campaign is said to be going on to the effect that the Germans in Slovakia may soon acquire German citizenship without the necessity of opting. For several months past there has been an inscription on the right (German) bank of the Danube, plainly visible to all citizens who walk along the river embankment, announcing 'Pressburg is, was and always will be German. Brothers, hold out! We are coming to fetch you home.' This first appeared during the crisis, but it has been allowed to remain; and either it is not affected by the weather or it is periodically renewed, because the lettering is still fresh and clear. Typical of the all-round complaisance of the Slovaks is the permission granted to the German sports associations to

become members of the Reichsbund der Leibesübungen and for all practical purposes wholly subjected to the administration and influence of that organisation. The Slovak Sports Association only reserves the right to nominate members of German clubs in Slovakia to play as members of the Slovak team in international matches. A German section has been created in the Slovak Ministry of Education under the supervision of a German official, and is to control the administration of all German elementary and higher elementary schools in Slovakia and also all other cultural matters.

7. It is probable that these concessions spring from a genuine spirit of tolerance and broadmindedness, characteristic of the Slovak people, which has not yet learned to claim the right to rule over the national minorities settled in its territory. Yet in spite of this compliance the German party has recently opposed two quite reasonable measures of the Government. At the New Year the dismissal of certain employees of a Bratislava petrol refinery was ordered because they had lost their Czecho-Slovak nationality through the cession of territory to Germany and Hungary. The factory is one of those scheduled as being of military importance. Some fifty Germans were affected, but Ing. Karmasin at once brought pressure to bear on the Government and they were reinstated. The census held on the 31st December, apparently to determine the number of Czechs, Jews and refugees inside the new State boundaries, was also opposed by the German party before and after it was carried out. Now Ing. Karmasin has declared to Dr. Tiso that he will not consider the results as bearing on the rights of the German community. A few days ago he was also reported as having said that on account of these matters tension existed between his party and the Government.

8. This attitude can hardly be pleasing to the latter. At the best it appears to be ungrateful, and, at the worst, an element making for instability and uncertainty when the Government is endeavouring to restore confidence.

9. According to a story which reached me from a reliable source, some German tanks recently crossed Slovak territory by night from the bridgehead at Bratislava to Devin (in German, Theben), the small piece of territory on the right bank of the Morava where it flows into the Danube which was taken by Germany at the end of last November. The tanks could have been shipped across the Danube without touching Czecho-Slovak territory; but transportation would have been difficult, so the Germans chose the simpler route. This action has caused considerable excitement here.

10. The more sensible elements, who were inclined to congratulate themselves last December that the Slovaks' past friendly and unprejudiced attitude towards Germany had proved them wiser than the Czechs, are now asking themselves why they should continue to be so friendly. Only the extremists of the Hlinka Guard, like Murgas, Chief of Staff, an admirer of fascism and author of a book on Fascist Italy, continue to be fascinated by the powerful and energetic Reich. They seem to feel that they at least are in her good books so that they have nothing to worry about.

11. Whilst Slovakia's foreign relations have been taking definite shape the realities of the economic situation at home have begun to make themselves

felt. The undisciplined and even riotous period of internal politics appears to have ended fairly soon. At any rate, it was already a thing of the past by the middle of last December. The atmosphere is now much calmer. Administrative difficulties are beginning to become apparent. Thirty professors from the university of Bratislava have been sent back to Prague and some departments, like the English department, have thereby ceased to function or even to exist. In the schools young undergraduates are acting as teachers and in some cases certain subjects have had to be dropped from the curriculum because there is nobody to give the lessons since the departure of the Czech teachers. The new recruits now being taken on by the police force are no longer expected to produce certificates of study at a higher elementary school, where the course lasts for eight years, but will be accepted even if they have only completed the elementary school education which lasts four years. After the original announcement was made that 9,000 Czech State employees would be placed at the disposal of the Central Government, I learned that 12,000 had applied for transfers. These people were afraid of, amongst other things, reduced salaries and higher taxation. The unpromising outlook for Government employees is generally admitted and the watchword everywhere is economy. Business is said to be bad in this town and the city administration is preoccupied with the problem of falling receipts from taxation. The Slovak budget, details of which are not yet known, amounts to 1.4 milliard crowns, and a deficit of 700 million is expected.

12. In addition to all these problems the considerable migration of Jewish capital from Slovak to Prague banks is reckoned a serious source of weakness to the Slovak financial position. The amount estimated to have been transferred runs into milliards of crowns.

13. In anticipation of discriminatory measures the Jews in Slovakia are endeavouring to emigrate. The extent of this movement can be particularly well assessed at a British consulate where numerous callers enquire every day regarding immigration into the British dominions and colonies.

14. The result of all these factors combined must inevitably be the economic stagnation of Slovakia and might even mean a disastrous impoverishment. Dr. Tiso, who, though he can have little understanding of economics, is, nevertheless, a level-headed man, is beginning to be worried about the future, and his recent speeches have contained statements to the effect that capital from outside, whether Czech or foreign, is welcome here. His references to the Jewish problem are not radical, and though he says he intends to arrange a final solution of it, he will see that this is carried out without damaging Slovak economic interests.

15. At the present time the Slovak Government contemplates sending a commission to Prague to arrange for the emigration of Jews from Slovakia. They will be allowed to take with them their capital, which will be converted into foreign currency at a rate equivalent to 300 crowns to the pound. The Government hopes to gain by restricting the scope of the black market and the Jews themselves will profit by obtaining a better rate than the 400-500 crowns they are paying now. Many Jews, according to my informant, have

been selling their property to Germans from the Reich, and the Government considers it far more dangerous, he said, that these properties should fall into the hands of the Reich Germans than that they should remain under Jewish ownership. The Government's plan is intended to remove this risk.

16. In the face of the immense internal difficulties and of the realisation that their former friends abroad had changed into unscrupulous adversaries, it is natural that the responsible elements in the Government should turn towards Prague. Since they have gained all that they wanted from the Czechs the way is open for *rapprochement*. The Slovaks are still distrustful and wary, but relations have definitely improved. Things not very important in themselves, such as the tact displayed by the new President, Dr. Hacha, have played a useful part in restoring goodwill. His New Year's visit to the graves of Hlinka and the victims of Cernova was suggested by himself, and certainly has done much to win him the sympathy of the Slovak public. The attendance of Beran and Syrový at the opening of the Slovak Parliament also flattered the Slovaks and created an excellent impression. But the transfer of Czech officials as long as it continues is bound to keep bitterness alive. These Czechs are not very prudent; they ridicule the shortcomings of the Slovak Administration, and in the same breath express indignation over their ejection and joy at their release.

17. The tendency of internal politics seems to be towards moderation and common sense. Many of Dr. Tiso's recent utterances have been quasi-apologetic as if he wished to conciliate the conservative elements who are now in opposition. In the Cabinet reconstruction which took place after the opening of the Slovak Parliament, two older men of moderate views were substituted for a young Minister who belongs to the Radical group. Further changes are expected. The principal leaders of business are dissatisfied and are beginning to make their influence felt. Dr. Zátka, secretary of the Bratislava Manufacturers' Association, also a Deputy and chairman of the Parliamentary Budget Committee, may become Minister of Commerce. Dr. Vanko, Minister of Justice, and other moderates are becoming pessimistic about the general situation and are advocating a more conservative policy. The only Radical Ministers at present are Dr. Durčanský and Sidor. The former has rather lost prestige on account of his misuse of the Slovak broadcasts from Vienna as a means of advertising himself and his brother, who are both lawyers. It is only recently that the broadcasts have been made to serve this purpose. They were originally devoted to anti-Czech propaganda.

18. There seems to be no actual persecution of the Slovak supporters of the previous régime, but they are all made to feel that they are unwanted. A number have already left for Prague, or intend to go.

19. Since there are many Ruthenians in Slovakia (the last census puts the number at over 80,000) the attitude of the Government to the Ukrainian problem is interesting. Dr. Houdek, a Conservative and former Minister, has been commissioned by Dr. Tiso to prepare a draft of an agreement proposing certain rectifications of the frontier between Slovakia and Ruthenia. The territory at present inhabited by Ruthenes in Slovakia forms a long

tongue, narrowing from east to west, and coming to a point at Poprad. If the Ruthenians insisted on their full rights they might claim a strip along the northern frontier of Slovakia and reaching almost to its middle point. I understand that by according some partial adjustments on its own initiative the Slovak Government hopes to avoid having to deal with a larger claim later. Whether Ukrainian nationalism, encouraged as it is by Germany, would be likely to accept such a settlement it is hard to say. The interesting point is that although the Czecho-Slovak State might one day be faced with a demand for secession, and although Slovakia herself might be obliged to surrender some of her territory to the Ukrainians, there is so far no feeling of hostility to the present Government in Ruthenia.

20. To resume, the political situation might be considered to be developing satisfactorily if it were not for the great economic difficulties which lie ahead. There are no rumours that Dr. Tiso is unequal to the task of controlling his Radical supporters. He has remained simple and affable in spite of his new position and appears to have the necessary degree of firmness and political skill. If there are any changes it seems most likely at present that they will favour the reasonable and sensible elements.

CHAPTER II

Further correspondence on the European situation and estimates of German intentions: German-Polish relations: the international guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia (February 10—March 9, 1939)

No. 98

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 51 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1318/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 10, 1939*

Your despatch No. 146.¹

1. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have now given consideration to the memorandum from the French Government dated February 1 enclosed in your despatch under reference.

2. His Majesty's Government wish to take this opportunity, as promised in paragraph 14 of my telegram No. 18,² to inform the French Government of the conclusion which, after due consideration, they have reached as regards the attitude they would adopt in the event of hostile action by Germany against the Netherlands. They confirm that in their view the strategical importance of the Netherlands is so great that a German attack on them must be regarded as a direct threat to the security of the Western Powers, and they consider that in the event of a German invasion of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom would be obliged to treat it as a *casus belli*. In addition His Majesty's Government consider that any attempt by Germany to dominate the Netherlands by force or threat of force would also have to be regarded as a menace to the security of the United Kingdom.

3. His Majesty's Government are glad to note that the French Government would, subject to one observation to which I will refer later, find themselves in agreement with His Majesty's Government in considering an invasion of Holland as a *casus belli*, notwithstanding that such an invasion would not in itself involve any contractual responsibility on the part of France.

4. The French Government have also asked for an assurance that an invasion of Switzerland would, no less than an invasion of Holland, be henceforward considered as justifying and calling for a decision contemplated by His Majesty's Government in the latter event. In reply to this request, His Majesty's Government wish to inform the French Government that in their

¹ No. 77.

² No. 40.

view a German attack on Switzerland would also be clear evidence of an attempt by Germany to dominate Europe by force, and that from this point of view a German attack on the Netherlands and a German attack on Switzerland would be in the same category. His Majesty's Government would accordingly be ready to undertake, if Germany invaded Switzerland and France thereupon declared war upon Germany, that Great Britain would go to the assistance of France, in the same way that they understand that France would be willing to support Great Britain if Germany invaded Holland and Great Britain thereupon declared war on Germany.

5. In the fourth paragraph of their memorandum the French Government have set out their conception of the common attitude which, in their view, should be adopted by Great Britain and France in face of the threat of unprovoked attack by Germany or Italy, and it is on the understanding that this conception is fully shared by His Majesty's Government that they would be prepared to adopt a similar attitude to that of His Majesty's Government in the event of a German invasion of the Netherlands.

6. It is clear that joint action by Germany and Italy against the two western Great Powers, or against any one of them, would have to be resisted in common by the two Powers with the whole of their resources; indeed the obligations which His Majesty's Government have assumed towards the French Government by treaty already cover the case of an unprovoked attack delivered upon France by Germany whether acting alone or in support of Italy. While it is possible that in the event of an attack upon France by Italy alone France might feel that it was not necessarily to her interest that Great Britain should intervene, if the effect of such intervention were to bring Germany into what might otherwise be a localised conflict, His Majesty's Government are fully conscious that the risks to which the two Powers are severally exposed cannot be dissociated. The French Government will have noted the statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on February 6³ in which he said that while it was impossible to examine in detail all the hypothetical cases which might arise, he felt bound to make it plain that the solidarity of interest by which France and the United Kingdom were united was such that any threat to the vital interests of France, from whatever quarter it came, must evoke the immediate co-operation of the United Kingdom.

7. It is in the light of this situation that His Majesty's Government have proposed to the French Government that the conversations which have taken place between the two General Staffs should be made more extensive in scope and more intimate in character than in the past. The conclusions which His Majesty's Government have reached as to the future conduct of these conversations were outlined in my telegram No. 25⁴ of the 3rd February, and have already been communicated by Your Excellency to the French Government.

8. I shall be glad if you will make a communication to the French Government in the sense of the present telegram, and if you will inform them that

³ See No. 94, note 1.

⁴ No. 81.

His Majesty's Government are communicating its terms to the Belgian Government for their secret information.

9. You should impress upon the French Government the secret character of the present communication.

Repeated to Brussels, The Hague, Berlin, Berne, Rome, and Washington.

No. 99

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

No. 1 Saving: Telegraphic [C 1318/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 10, 1939*

My telegram to Paris No. 51 Saving.¹

Paragraph 8.

Please make a communication to the Belgian Government accordingly.

¹ No. 98.

No. 100

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 17)

No. 17 [C 2025/15/18]

BELGRADE, *February 10, 1939*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a note by the Military Attaché, recording a conversation which he had with General Simovitch, the Yugoslav Chief of the General Staff, on the 7th February, concerning the European situation.

2. Your Lordship will see that, in General Simovitch's opinion, there is now less danger of a German thrust towards the Ukraine or Roumania than a few weeks ago; and it is clear that, as a result of recent visits of Colonel Beck to Berchtesgaden and of Herr von Ribbentrop to Warsaw, the views of the Yugoslav General Staff in this respect have undergone a change since the conversation between Colonel Mason-MacFarlane and his Yugoslav colleague at Berlin, reported in Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes's despatch No. 13¹ of the 4th January last.

3. General Simovitch, you will observe, assured Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge, in great confidence, that, in the event of a general conflagration, the sympathies of the Yugoslav army, and, indeed, of the majority of the Yugoslav people, would lie with Great Britain and France rather than with the totalitarian Powers. While I have no reason to doubt that General Simovitch's statement is substantially correct, it does not alter the fact, to which I have more than once drawn attention, that Yugoslavia's geographical position would oblige her to preserve as long as possible a neutrality which,

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 516.

under the stress of economic considerations, might even tend to favour Germany and Italy, if these Powers were ranged together in a future war.

I have, &c.,

R. H. CAMPBELL

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 100

Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge to His Majesty's Minister, Belgrade

BELGRADE, February 7, 1939

Sir,

To-day I had a long talk with General Simovitch, the Chief of the General Staff. I had asked to see him now because I felt it would probably be the last occasion upon which I should have an opportunity of conversing with him informally, as I shall be making my farewell official call on him next week.

Our discussion ranged over a number of subjects, some of them of a personal nature. I will set forth briefly the main points he made which may be of interest.

In regard to the present state of affairs in Europe and the outlook for the coming months, the General was of opinion that in the last few weeks an improvement had taken place, and especially since Colonel Beck's visit to Berchtesgaden. Prior to that event, he had believed that a danger existed of a German drive eastwards, either with the object of establishing an independent Ukraine or with a view to penetrating into Roumania, but that, as a result of the visit, Herr Hitler had come to realise that such schemes were not at present practicable. Colonel Beck, he thought, may have succeeded in convincing the Führer that the Ukraine venture, and possibly the Roumanian, would inevitably bring Russia in against him. For that reason they had, temporarily at least, been abandoned. He also professed to believe that the Germans had recently somewhat revised their very low estimate of the Russian armed forces and that it was possible that Colonel Beck had had a hand in this.

Having abandoned his eastern projects, Herr Hitler had, in General Simovitch's view, turned his eyes westwards, but once again he had received a nasty check and this time it had come from the mouth of President Roosevelt.¹ Faced with difficulties on both sides, it seemed more than probable that Herr Hitler would content himself for this year in using Italy as a sort of *ballon d'essai* by encouraging her to stir up the waters of the Mediterranean against France and indirectly against Britain, whilst he, Hitler, observed the reactions. The General even thought it not impossible, if things went well,

¹ The reference is probably to a press report on February 1 that President Roosevelt had told the Military Committee of the Senate that France was the actual frontier of America in an apparently inevitable 'showdown' between the democracies and the dictatorships. In a press conference on February 3 Mr. Roosevelt denied that he had said this, and reaffirmed the American foreign policy of no entangling alliances, but sympathy with the maintenance of the independence of all nations.

that General Franco might be assisted secretly to make an attack on Gibraltar. In any event, he mistrusted the Italian pledges to withdraw from Spain and the Balearic Islands.

The foregoing is, of course, mostly conjecture, but from the manner in which the Chief of Staff spoke he would appear to have had information which had caused him, since Colonel Beck's visit to Berchtesgaden, to alter his view on the outlook.

What are of more positive interest to us here are the statements he made to me concerning Yugoslavia's position. He thought that, in spite of the dangers which might threaten them in the north and west and in the south-east—he is, like all Serbian generals, profoundly mistrustful of Bulgaria—Yugoslavia's position was not so bad as the map made it look, because they were pushing on, and intended greatly to accelerate, their defensive arrangements. He also thought that President Roosevelt's declaration of policy had a direct and beneficial bearing upon this country's security. He saw in it a warning to the Rome-Berlin Powers which they could not afford to ignore.

I tried to draw the General out on the subject of the Balkan Entente, but he was reserved, and I think a little uncertain, as to the merits of this alliance. He did, however, say that one could never be sure of support when the moment for it actually arrived.

Finally, he made a statement to me which confirms the views I have always expressed as to the true feelings of the Yugoslav army, but coming direct from the Chief of Staff it is, I think, a matter of some importance. He said: 'You can rest absolutely assured of one thing, and that is that the sympathies of the whole army, and, indeed, of the majority of the Yugoslav people, are strongly directed to Britain and France. If a general war came, we should certainly be neutral at the outset, but later on, if it became possible to do so, we should throw in our lot with our old allies.' He went on to point out that the Yugoslav contribution on land and in the air might not be a negligible factor, and as regards the navy, though it was small, it might assist in keeping the harbours of the Adriatic open to our ships. He begged me, however, to treat this statement of his as very confidential, which I, of course, undertook to do.

H. C. T. STRONGE,
Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 101

Letter from Sir A. Cadogan to Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

[C 1502/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 11, 1939*

We have received your secret despatch No. 68¹ of the 2nd February which shows how delicate is the question not only of the possible resumption of

¹ No. 80.

Staff conversations between the Belgian and the French General Staffs, but even of the contacts we ourselves have secretly established with the Chief of the General Staff.

We are inclined to agree with you that it would be inopportune to say anything more to the Belgian Government at present, and certainly not in any civilian quarter. You will have noted from paragraph 7 of our reply² to the French memorandum of February 1, which you have been instructed to communicate to the Belgian Government, that the Belgian Government will now be made aware that we have proposed to the French Government that the conversations which have taken place between the two General Staffs should be made more extensive in scope and more intimate in character than in the past. That, I think, is all that we need say to the Belgian Government at the moment.

We are wondering, however, what more, if anything, should be said to the Chief of the Belgian Staff. What the Secretary of State has in mind is that we might inform him that we are having closer contact with the French, and that we hope to have further contacts with the Belgians at a later stage.

In order that you may see how we stand with the French, I send you for your personal and secret information a copy of a telegram³ we have sent to Phipps giving the French our idea of the basis on which our Staff conversations with them should be conducted in future. Do you think it would be wise, or advantageous to us, if we were to let General Van den Bergen know, for his own personal and secret information, roughly what the basis of our future Staff conversations with the French is likely to be; and would it be wise or advantageous to hint that we should hope that in due course our own conversations with him might be increased in scope and made more intimate?

I should be glad to have your views on these points. You should not, of course, at this stage, and without further instructions, make any new approach to General Van den Bergen.

We are not at all sure that the best course to pursue with the Belgians is to try to establish any new basis of discussion with them. Our view has been in the past that if we are to extend the scope and increase the intimacy of our contacts with the Belgian Staff, the best way to do it is little by little, and without saying that we are doing it. But we should be grateful for any advice you can give us.

A. CADOGAN

P.S. I am sending a copy of this letter to Phipps and Bland.

² No. 98.

³ No. 81.

No. 102

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 13, 1.45 p.m.)

No. 9 Telegraphic [C 1852/15/18]

BRUSSELS, February 13, 1939, 12.18 p.m.

Your telegram No. 1. Saving.¹

In view of Cabinet crisis² and uncertainty as to who may be the next Minister for Foreign Affairs I propose subject to your concurrence to defer action on your telegram.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 99.

² The Belgian Government under M. Spaak resigned on February 9. M. Pierlot formed a new Government on February 20.

No. 103

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 122 [N 669/57/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 14, 1939

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 75¹ of the 27th January, I have to inform Your Excellency that on the 3rd February the Soviet Ambassador called on the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at his own request, and during a long conversation outlined his view of the course of Anglo-Soviet relations during the six years of his tenure of office.

2. M. Maisky said that, at first, things had been difficult, but that, thanks to careful and tactful negotiations, the Trade Agreement had been signed. After that, he had thought the intimacy of relations was most marked at the period of Mr. Eden's visit to Moscow.² Since then there had been no marked change, but during the last year he had noticed that the atmosphere had not been so cordial, except for one critical moment in September last, when His Majesty's Government appeared anxious to enter into friendly relations with the Soviet Government. He could understand that there was nothing intentional in the slight alteration in the atmosphere; and he was anxious that the present Trade Agreement should not be denounced because, as he stated with some emphasis, he could give an assurance that this would have an extremely bad political and economic effect. The Soviet negotiators, he added, would be extremely hard to deal with in the event of any attempt to make a new Treaty. As for the German trade mission, its visit had been called off—he thought, for no very important reason—and the Soviet Government were content to wait. He went on to say that upon Anglo-Soviet relations would depend the future peace of the world.

3. In view of the emphasis which M. Maisky laid on the Trade Agreement,

¹ No. 38.

² Mr. Eden visited Moscow in 1935.

Mr. Butler asked him whether he had discussed the subject with the President of the Board of Trade, whom, his Excellency had said, he knew well; and he replied that he thought he might perhaps do so.

4. Turning to the international situation, M. Maisky said that, in his view, Herr Hitler had given Signor Mussolini a blank cheque with which the Duce would hurry to the bank, and upon which he would probably make some advances in the speech which he was expected to make on the 4th February.³ If the cheque was not cashed at once it might be dishonoured; and there was, therefore, no reason to expect a period of calm in international relations. According to M. Maisky's information, Signor Mussolini had two plans for Tunis, one more modest and one less modest. The former amounted to proposals for a *condominium* over Tunis; the latter involved the cession of the southern portion of the country to Italy. If he found hesitation or uncertainty on the side of France he would press the latter; if a determined front were presented to him he would hesitate before embarking on a war and would suggest the former.

5. M. Maisky laid stress on the recent Italian initiative in proposing the transformation of the Anti-Comintern Pact into an 'anti-democracies pact'. He said that the recent meeting of Japanese Ambassadors in Paris had agreed to this as the wiser course on the suggestion of the Japanese Ambassador at Rome, who was much under the influence of Signor Mussolini. He himself felt that the Chinese could continue to offer resistance to the Japanese, particularly if His Majesty's Government gave them what help they could, and that this might prevent the Japanese from embarking on further adventures. He was sure in any case that the Soviet stand in the Far East would convince the Japanese that an attack on the Soviet Union was not worth while.

6. M. Maisky considered that the tone of Herr Hitler's speech before the Reichstag was due to the need for slowing down the *tempo* of his foreign policy as a result of the anti-Jewish excesses, which had provoked a stronger reaction than had been anticipated in Germany. Reading between the lines of Herr Hitler's remarks on colonies, his Excellency thought they meant that now was the opportunity for France and Britain to make suggestions to Germany and that if Herr Hitler received no suggestions he would, at a later date, begin to say that he was regretfully obliged to apply pressure. Meanwhile, Herr Hitler had decided that the wisest course would be to advise Signor Mussolini to 'let in the colonial clutch' and see what happened in Africa. M. Maisky thought that the dictators would go just as far as they dared and that, though neither of them wanted a general war, yet events might cause them to slide into one.

7. Mr. Butler gained the impression from M. Maisky that the Soviet Government would now pursue an isolationist policy.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris, Berlin and Rome.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

³ Presumably at the Meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on February 4.

No. 104

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 15)

No. 207 [C 1930/231/17]

PARIS, February 14, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that I handed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 13th February a memorandum in the sense of Your Lordship's telegram No. 51 Saving¹ of the 10th February on the subject of Anglo-French solidarity. A copy of the memorandum² is enclosed, herein.

2. M. Bonnet thanked me and promised to reply at an early date to my memorandum of the 3rd February on the subject of the future conduct of conversations between the British and French General Staffs, of which a copy was enclosed in my despatch No. 164 Secret³ of the 6th February.

I have, &c.,
ERIC PHIPPS

¹ No. 98.

² Not printed.

³ Not printed. The text of this memorandum was identical with that of telegram No. 25 to Paris (No. 81).

No. 105

*Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 15, 2.50 p.m.)*

No. 31 Telegraphic [C 1944/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 15, 1939, 1.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 26.¹

I observe from 'The Times' of February 14 that in answer to question in Parliament² Mr. Butler said that option applied amongst others to persons of Jewish race. This was certainly our original understanding of optional [*sic* ? Optants] Agreement but feeling some doubts on the point as a result of a recent article in the press I enquired in that sense at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. I was informed that there is a difference of opinion between German and Czecho-Slovak Governments on the interpretation of expression 'persons of non-German Volkszugehörigkeit'³ in article 3 of optional [*sic*] Agreement insofar as it applies to Sudeten Jews. Germans contend that it applies to Jews of every description. Czechs contend that it applies only to those Jews whose mother-tongue is Czech, in other words that the majority of Sudeten Jews, whose mother-tongue is German, are not entitled to opt for Czecho-Slovakia. The matter is to be referred to mixed commission provided for in article 13 of Agreement.

¹ No. 89.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, cols. 1350-1.

³ Literally: 'race-participation', i.e. 'non-racial Germans'.

3. I have thought it well to bring foregoing to you though the point is perhaps academic as even if Sudeten German Jews are allowed to opt they will be threatened with losing their citizenship under decree No. 15—see my despatch No. 54.⁴

⁴ Not printed. This decree provided for the revision of the Czecho-Slovak citizenship of persons naturalized since 1918, and of persons resident in territory recently detached from Czecho-Slovakia who were not of Czech, Slovak, or Ruthene race.

No. 106

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 1852/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 15, 1939, 11.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 9.¹

I should prefer that you should make communication to the Political Director, or whichever permanent official is in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, without waiting for a solution of the Cabinet crisis and appointment of new Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 102.

No. 107

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson¹ (Berlin) and
Mr. Troutbeck (Prague)*

No. 11 Saving:² Telegraphic [C 1681/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 15, 1939, 11.15 p.m.*

Prague (Your) telegram No. 26³.

1. During debates on the Czech Loan Bill⁴ there was a demand for fuller details of the working of the Optants Agreement. Chancellor of the Exchequer undertook that further enquiries would be made in Berlin and Prague.

2. Information so far furnished by Czecho-Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not very helpful. What we should like is some indication of the number of persons on either side who have already opted, and an assurance that all those who are entitled to opt are being afforded opportunities of so doing.

3. We feel that we can properly expect to be given all available information on these points, since Article 7 of the Munich Agreement gives us a *locus standi*.

4. Please report as soon as possible.

¹ Sir N. Henderson returned to Berlin on February 13. He had been on leave since October 18, 1938.

² No. 11 Saving to Berlin: No. 19 to Prague.

³ No. 89.

⁴ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, cols. 773-855, 1451-74, 1661-71.

No. 108

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 85 [C 1894/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 15, 1939*

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 84¹ of 15th February, I have to inform Your Excellency that the Polish Ambassador visited this department on February 10 to follow up his conversation with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs about the proposed visit to this country of the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. Count Raczynski said that he had reported to Warsaw what Mr. Butler had said to him on this subject. He now understood that M. Beck was pleased and relieved to learn that it might be possible to arrange a visit apart from a meeting of the Committee of Three, at which an opportunity would be afforded to discuss other matters besides Danzig. M. Beck had, however, indicated that the beginning of March would not be very suitable, since it was the time when he was expecting visits to Warsaw from the Italian and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs. He had left the question at that, and did not suggest any date himself.

3. Count Raczynski was asked if he had given any thought to the point of whether or not it would be necessary for some special reason or excuse to be found for the visit. His Excellency said that this point had been left vague and that the whole question was still in an exploratory stage.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ Not printed. This despatch reported Count Raczynski's statement to Mr. Butler that M. Beck wished to come to London, preferably after he had agreed with the German Government upon 'some solution for settling the Danzig problem for the time being'.

No. 109

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 16, 11.45 a.m.)

No. 61 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 2013/16/18]

BERLIN, *February 16, 1939*

1. I called on Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday evening. His attitude was remarkably friendly.

2. I told him that I had returned for what I regarded as my second period at Berlin inspired by the same desire to work for an understanding as I had had when I arrived for the first time, and I added that having concentrated less long for that object than he had I was probably less weary of well-doing than he was. Whereupon Herr von Ribbentrop quickly and with apparent sincerity denied any weariness and asseverated the unabated keenness of his determination to work for the same object as myself.

3. His Excellency said that nobody in Germany was thinking of anything but peace. He spoke calmly but with evident annoyance of anti-German attitude of America. He concluded his remarks on that subject by observing that no amount of propaganda could in these days in the long run influence popular wishes, inferring thereby that the American people itself did not desire bad relations with Germany. My impression was that the phrase was Herr Hitler's¹ and I hoped inwardly that the latter had drawn this conclusion from the demonstration of feelings of his own people on the occasion of the Prime Minister's visits to Germany last year. If that is so it is all to the good.

4. Herr von Ribbentrop spoke . . .² of Dr. Ley's visit to London³ which he told me that he had himself sponsored. He had seen Dr. Ley at Hamburg. He added that he much hoped that President of the Board of Trade would come to Germany next month as he felt the best beginning for a better atmosphere would be along economic lines. Dr. Funk would certainly go to England if he was invited to do so later on and would have gone now if it had not been that he was overwhelmed with the work of his new office as President of the Reichsbank. We agreed that neither of us knew very clearly what line any economic discussions would take but that the first aim was to discover where co-operation could most usefully be sought.

5. I also mentioned to the Minister that I proposed to see Field-Marshal Göring at the end of the week and to speak to the latter about a visit to Germany by representatives of British Air Force. My general impression was that Herr von Ribbentrop, now that his position with the Führer is assured, was much calmer and more self-confident than before. He enquired about internal situation in England and was unusually attentive to my comments on that subject. He asked why the Prime Minister had not held an election after Munich. I explained the reasons which I felt had prevented such a course being adopted and added my firm conviction that the Prime Minister's position in the country was in consequence even stronger today than last October. Herr von Ribbentrop seemed surprised but impressed and I took the opportunity to warn him against being unduly influenced by noisy outcry of a section of London opinion and Opposition press which was far from representing the mass of public opinion in England.

¹ The phrase occurred in Herr Hitler's speech of January 30.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ Dr. Ley had recently attended a meeting in London of the International Advisory Committee of the World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation.

No. 110

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 17)

No. 11 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2061/54/18]

WARSAW, February 16, 1939

As reports have appeared in the press here of arrests among German minority in the Corridor I have made enquiries and am informed that some

twenty arrests have recently been made on charges ranging from spying and subversion [*sic* ? subversive] organisation to expression of anti-Polish views.

Some indignation is expressed by Germans here at anti-German actions carried out by local officials in distinction to the professed policy of Polish Government. There are however many signs that in such matters as minority problems, press articles etc., Polish Government do not feel any particular necessity to truckle to Germany at the present time.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 111

Letter from Mr. Strang to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

[C 1592/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 16, 1939

In our despatch No. 84¹ of the 15th February, we are sending you a record of a conversation Butler had with Raczyński on the 3rd February, about a possible visit by Beck to this country and about the situation of Jews in Danzig.

It may be useful to you to know that Raczyński came to see me on the 2nd February, the day before he saw Butler. He said he wished to speak to me quite privately. He was very anxious that Beck should come here, and he wanted to see how such a visit could best be arranged. He had with him a telegram from Beck, which he admitted he did not fully understand, but which seemed to him to imply: (1) that during the conversations which Beck had with Hitler and Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden and with Ribbentrop at Warsaw, the question of German-Polish relations was discussed only in general terms; (2) that it was the Germans rather than the Poles who were pressing for detailed negotiations; (3) that Beck had no intention of giving something for nothing and had made it clear that for every concession he made he would want something in return; (4) that Beck doubted, therefore, whether any detailed German-Polish agreement was likely to be concluded for some little time to come; (5) that an early meeting of the Committee of Three, unless the Committee should decide once again to postpone a decision, might be embarrassing.

Raczyński said that this had a bearing on Beck's proposed visit here. From the point of view of German-Polish relations, it would be best that the Committee should meet as late as possible, preferably just before the next Council about the middle of May. On the other hand, if Beck were to come here, a good time would be the middle or end of March.

It seemed to Raczyński, therefore, that there were two alternative courses. It might be arranged that the Committee of Three, if it met in London in March, should take no final decision; or if that were not feasible, some other excuse should be found for Beck's visit.

We agreed it was most [? un]likely, in view of the Swedish attitude, that any undertaking could be given to Beck that the Committee of Three, if it

¹ Not printed. See No. 108, note 1.

met in London in March, would take no final step. Raczynski said that since that was so, it might be better to try to find some other reason for Beck to come here.

I told Raczynski that I thought it might be a good thing if he were to talk to Butler, since Butler had handled the Danzig question at Geneva, and he agreed. I could tell Butler what he had said to me. It was then arranged that he should see Butler on the following day.

W. STRANG

No. 112

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 17, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 35 Telegraphic [C 2100/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 17, 1939, 5.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 11 Saving to Berlin.¹

Further enquiry at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs elicited the fact that up to yesterday the Ministry of the Interior had received 21,000 declarations of option for Czecho-Slovakia. Six or seven thousand should be deducted from that figure as being declarations submitted by persons who were already Czecho-Slovak citizens, and so had no need to opt. It was anticipated that declarations would come in in greater numbers as (? March 29) drew nearer and the present figure was no indication of what the final figure would be. 50,000 was suggested as a very tentative estimate. Meanwhile we could rest assured that Czecho-Slovak authorities were placing no difficulties in the way of persons desiring to opt for Czecho-Slovakia. Their declarations could be made in person or in writing and submitted at choice to the nearest Consul or to the Ministry of the Interior. Applications were dealt with with all possible expedition.

2. Nor did my informant suggest that the German authorities were placing difficulties in the way of persons desiring to opt for Czecho-Slovakia. (? On the other hand) he complained that those persons who were entitled to opt for *Germany* were being actively discouraged from doing so by local German leaders. In addition, at the instigation of the German Government articles of option agreement providing for exchange of populations had been tacitly abandoned.

3. My informant waxed strongly on the question of the right of the Sudeten German Jews to opt for Czecho-Slovakia (my telegram No. 31²). He refused to agree that the question was academic. Whole object of the Munich Agreement he argued, was to separate Germans and Czechs. That idea was already abandoned by the German Government by measures they were taking to retain as large a German minority as possible in this country. If they also insisted on throwing upon Czecho-Slovakia all Sudeten Jews whose mother tongue was German, it would be a still grosser injustice, particularly as the Jews had been even more active than Christian Germans

¹ No. 107.

² No. 105.

in Germanising Bohemia in the old days. Moreover, German idea of 'Volk' was quite foreign to Czecho-Slovakia as well as to all other countries, and it would be a dangerous precedent to recognize it. Finally it was unfair that Czecho-Slovakia should be expected to support or find money for emigration of all German Jews of the Sudetenland. He could give me no indication however of the number still left there who would be driven into this country if the German thesis prevailed. Nor could he say when the issue would be decided with the German Government. Mixed Commission had never yet met and it rested with the German Government to call the first meeting.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 113

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Mallet (Washington)

No. 81 Telegraphic [C 1474/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 17, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

My telegrams Nos. 64¹ and 65.²

Please communicate the following to the State Department for the personal and confidential information of the President.

1. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have now considered the French Note summarised in my telegram No. 65 and have sent a reply reproducing the substance of paragraph 1 sections (a) and (b) of my telegram No. 64 and stating as regards Switzerland that if Germany invaded Switzerland, and France thereupon declared war on Germany, the United Kingdom would go to the assistance of France in the same way that they understood France would be willing to support Great Britain if Germany invaded Holland and Great Britain thereupon declared war upon Germany.

2. In reply to the French arguments regarding Anglo-French solidarity in the face of an unprovoked attack by Germany or Italy, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom stated that joint action by Germany and Italy against the two Western Great Powers, or against any one of them, would clearly have to be resisted in common by the two Powers with the whole of their resources; indeed the obligations which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom had assumed towards the French Government by treaty already covered the case of an unprovoked attack delivered upon France by Germany, whether acting alone or in support of Italy. While it was possible that in the event of an attack upon France by Italy alone France might feel that it was not necessarily in her interests that Great Britain should intervene if the effect of such intervention were to bring Germany into what might otherwise be a localised conflict, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom were fully conscious that the risks to which the two Powers were severally exposed could not be dissociated. French Government would have noted the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on February 6.³ It was in the light of this situation that His Majesty's Govern-

¹ No. 87.

² No. 88.

³ See No. 94, note 1.

ment in the United Kingdom had proposed to the French Government the extension of staff conversations discussed in paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 64.

3. The terms of this reply to the French Government are being communicated to the Belgian Government for their secret information.

No. 114

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 17, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 21 Telegraphic [N 884/411/38]

MOSCOW, February 17, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 18,¹ last paragraph.

There have been further rumours here regarding impending commercial negotiations between Soviet and German Governments. In particular my French colleague informs me that M. Litvinov told him the other day that he had been officially approached by German Ambassador with suggestion that such negotiations should be initiated. According to another diplomatic source Herr Schnurre is due to arrive here March 8.

2. German Embassy, on other hand, while admitting that there is still some prospect of negotiations, denies that anything definite has been arranged at any rate with their knowledge. They attribute sudden decision to cancel Herr Schnurre's visit to undesirable publicity given to the proposed visit in foreign press and to political significance quite wrongly attributed to it. They suggest this was work of the Poles. It appears that Herr Schnurre is at present in Warsaw where he is to consider commercial negotiations with Polish Government.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of February 2, Sir W. Seeds reported that the German Ambassador told him that Herr Schnurre would not be able to come to Moscow before March 1.

No. 115

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 41 Telegraphic [C 2013/16/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 17, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 61.¹

Before speaking to Field-Marshal Göring as suggested in paragraph 5 of your telegram under reference please see enclosures to Mr. Strang's letter of February 13² to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes, which represent my views.

¹ No. 109.

² Not printed. This letter enclosed copies of correspondence with the Air Ministry about the possibility of a R.A.F. visit to Germany, in which the Foreign Office expressed the view that a visit by the Secretary of State for Air would not be advisable, but that one by the Chief of the Air Staff might be useful.

No. 116

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 18)

No. 41 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2101/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 17, 1939

My telegram No. 35.¹

According to a circular issued by the Ministry of the Interior on December 21 an optant has to show proof among other things that he is not of German 'Volkszugehörigkeit'.² The relevant passage continues:

'Suitable proof will be for example a certificate regarding the nationality professed at the census, which is provided on request by the State Statistical Office, a certificate from his employers, a certificate regarding attendance at schools where the language of instruction was Czech (Slovak), a birth certificate showing that the parents were by origin of indubitably Czech (Slovak) nationality, a testimonial from the communal officials; proofs can also be provided of membership of national associations, also a testimonial from reliable witnesses etc.'

¹ No. 112.

² See No. 105, note 3, for the translation of this term.

No. 117

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 24)

No. 223 [C 2325/11/18]

BERLIN, February 17, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a report by the Air Attaché to this Embassy on the subject of the present condition of the German air force.

2. The inferences to be drawn from this report are that, as a result of recent reorganisation, the German air force may not for the moment be at its highest point of efficiency, but that, on the other hand, from the point of view of comparative quality and quantity of personnel and material, it will reach its zenith during the present year and that this superiority will then tend to decrease as British and French air rearmament expands. In general, I am in agreement with the conclusions reached in the final paragraph of Group Captain Vachell's report, but I should like to emphasise that the efficiency and commanding superiority of the German air force during 1939 are only one of the many factors which would have to be taken into consideration by the German Government in the event of the embarkation on any war, and I do not think that the air factor in itself could be regarded in this connexion as an overriding consideration in German policy. I fully appreciate the dangers of the German air arm, if it were to be used against our country, and for this reason it seems highly necessary that the present *tempo* of British and French air expansion should continue as speedily and unobtrusively as

possible, in order that we may reach at the earliest moment that state of defence which would render us strong enough to make war in the air unprofitable for any aggressor.

I have, &c.,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 117

Group Captain Vachell to Sir N. Henderson

BERLIN, *February 15, 1939*

Sir,

I have the honour to submit my views on the present situation. From the purely air aspect and putting aside other considerations, I feel that it is unlikely that Germany will undertake any military operation for the next two, or possibly three, months. On the other hand, if she has any intention of risking becoming embroiled in war, my view is that she will be relatively stronger in the air during 1939 than during the few years that follow.

2. This year started with a flood of rumours that Germany was about to embark on some military enterprise in the very near future, but they now seem to have died down again. I was never able to get any confirmation of them in air force circles. Several officers, both senior ones serving at the Air Ministry and junior ones stationed near Berlin, spoke of taking leave in March for ski-ing; others freely admitted that the events of last year had caused serious dislocation in training and interference with the development of their organisation, and said that the German air force badly needed, and expected to be allowed, a period in which to settle down and put its house in order. I formed the opinion that the German air force generally believed that there was very little likelihood of its being called upon for any operations for some months. At the same time, I realise that this in itself proves nothing, for if the party leaders intend to embark on some military venture, it is quite likely to be put into effect without taking the advice of, or even consulting, any senior officer in the air force, except perhaps Field-Marshal Göring.

3. Nevertheless, even the party leaders must realise that it is unwise to make important changes in organisation shortly before a force is required to undertake an important operation, and on the 4th February the press announced that Herr Hitler, in his capacity as head of the defence forces, had decided upon a number of important changes in the organisation of the air force. I have not yet been able to grasp the full significance of all the changes at the Air Ministry, but they have involved a change of post for most of the senior officers and it must take some little time for each of them to settle down in his new appointment and to get to know his new staff. The changes in organisation outside the Air Ministry appeared on paper to be even more important, but, as I have explained elsewhere, I rather doubt whether that is so. Nevertheless, of the six Fliegerdivisionen, into which the operational flying units of the German air force are now believed to be organised, five received new commanders on the 4th February, which should be a good

enough indication that there is no intention to use these divisions for operations in the very near future.

4. The other question, however, as to the probability of the German air force being put to the test this year is less reassuring, for my estimate is that after 1939 it must become relatively weaker for the next few years. The year 1938 was one of steady though not spectacular progress. Hitler announced that, after the inaccurate statements about his military preparations in the foreign press in March, he gave orders for the expansion of the air force to be expedited. But these orders seem to have been slow in bearing fruit, and it was not until quite late in the year that the existence of any new units began to be discovered. It was noticeable, too, that, after a new aerodrome and its buildings appeared to have been completed, there was usually some delay before it was taken into use. Before the orders to expedite expansion were given, it was known that the German aircraft industry was being reorganised and there is no doubt that during 1938 the output of aircraft and engines was accelerated. The rapid growth of the German air force since 1935 is a very remarkable achievement, and there is nothing to show that an end to the expansion is yet in sight. I have no information that shortage of labour or of raw materials have yet proved limiting factors, but most of the new factories are now almost in full production, and it seems to me that any further marked increase in output is unlikely; with the installation of new jigs and tools for the production of new types, there may even be a slight decrease. The formation of new units may be expected to continue steadily, but, unless there is some radical change in conditions, it seems impossible that there can be any further rapid expansion in the strength of Germany's air force.

5. The expansion of the aircraft industry in Great Britain seems to have been slower than was expected, and even with developments in the Dominions and purchases from America, it seems doubtful whether for some time it will be possible to equal the German output, much less make up lost ground. But the disparity between the British and German outputs must be steadily growing less, and, even if the British air force cannot catch up with the German air force in actual numbers, the difference in the rate at which the two are expanding must be diminishing. The French aircraft industry's output is still well below that of Great Britain and it must be some time before the majority of French units can be equipped with modern types of aircraft, but it is reasonable to believe that the French air force has touched its lowest level and that, unless conditions entirely change, its position in relation to the German air force must steadily improve. Thus, from the point of view of numbers alone, Germany's position is not getting better, but is becoming relatively worse.

6. It has become the habit to compare the strengths of air forces by assessing numbers, probably because it is such an easy method and because it is not easy to estimate the relative importance of quality to quantity, but mere numbers are, of course, apt to be misleading. In the matter of quality the German air force at the beginning of 1939 was in a relatively strong position. The year 1935, when Germany began openly to build up her air

force, was just about the time when all air forces were beginning to change over from the biplane to the monoplane type of construction with its enhanced performance, and naturally all the new German factories were designed for this new type, so that by the beginning of 1939 all units of the German air force were equipped with types of aircraft which were first produced in 1936. It took some time to adapt some of the older British factories to new methods of construction and by the beginning of 1939 there were a number of units which still had the old types first produced in 1933 or 1934, with performance much inferior to the German types, but re-equipment is proceeding at a good pace and the new British types are of slightly later design and have more powerful engines and rather better performance than the corresponding German types. France, having started to re-equip later even than Great Britain, has probably few units yet equipped with modern types of aircraft, but it is to be expected that the new French types, when they do reach units, being of slightly later design, should be an improvement on the British.

7. Germany is not standing still, for the 1936 types of design, Messerschmitt 109 and Dornier 17, for instance, are now being produced with more powerful engines and so have a better performance. It is reported that the Junkers 88 is just starting to be produced in quantity to replace the Dornier 17, and the Messerschmitt 110, a new twin-engined fighter, is just beginning to be issued to units. Nevertheless, Germany's temporary superiority in equipment is on the wane and from about the middle of 1939 onwards I estimate that the British air force and a good proportion of the French will be equipped with aircraft which are slightly superior to, instead of inferior to, those of the Germans.

8. While the German air force, in being able to start afresh in 1935, enjoyed a certain advantage in the matter of material, it suffered a serious disadvantage in the matter of personnel, owing to the lack of experienced instructors, and it is quite certain that the British and highly probable that the French are better trained than the Germans. There has also been a weakness due to the shortage of officers to fill staff appointments. But these two weaknesses are steadily disappearing as mistakes are rectified and experience is gained. No force can ever be completely ready for war, but it is not considered that any doubts about the standard of training reached by the German air force would cause any hesitation to put it to the test.

9. I do not believe that the German air force, which has by now grown to a very formidable strength, has been built up with a view to attacking any particular enemy. Its organisation, equipment and the distribution of units has up till now given little indication of any strategical design and rather conveys the impression that the aim has been to build up the strongest possible air force in as short a time as possible.

It is believed that the role of the force is to provide a threat to other nations who might consider resisting German aims by force of arms. I do not suggest that, because the German air force may later become a less effective deterrent, it will therefore be put to use this year, but I consider it worthy of note that,

if Germany does decide that war is necessary for her aims, the year 1939 is the most suitable from the air point of view.

J. L. VACHELL,
Group Captain, Air Attaché

No. 118

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 64 Telegraphic [C 2139/15/18]

BERLIN, February 18, 1939, 9.42 p.m.

I called on Field-Marshal Göring this morning and had a long and as usual frank talk with him.

He began by telling me that he had taken off forty pounds in weight and wanted to remove sixty. I told him that I thought this excessive but he said that the only effect was to make him tired and that in consequence he was going to San Remo early next month for a complete rest cure during which he would refuse to be bothered with any detail whatsoever of administration or policy. 'People', he said, 'can make what mistakes they like while I am away; I shall not care.'

I said that I thought that he could have his rest without uneasiness as I did not believe in any immediate serious international trouble unless Italy made it. General [*sic*] Göring at once replied that he wished that he was as confident as I was. What guarantee had Germany that Mr. Chamberlain would remain in office and that he would not be succeeded by 'a Mr. Churchill or a Mr. Eden' Government? That was Germany's main preoccupation: we had not a settled Government like the Führer's and nobody could be certain how long the present British Government would remain in power. Nobody except a few fools wanted war in Germany and the German plans for peace were made for two years ahead already. But what was the meaning of the vast sums of money for British rearmament? There were two explanations: either, he said, England sought to render her position unassailable by her preparations for defence, or she intended to use her armament, when completed, for a preventive war on Germany. Nobody in Germany objected to the first and indeed he himself entirely approved of it as corresponding to Germany's own policy. But many people believed that the second alternative would be the one followed if anything happened to Mr. Chamberlain, and if Labour or any other government took office as result of elections.

I told the Field-Marshal that he could take it for granted that the first explanation was the only correct one, and I gave him a brief account of my own views as drawn from personal observation or from conversations with the Prime Minister himself in regard to the internal situation in England.

I urged him moreover to realise that the policy of a preventive war, attributed to some British politicians, carried no weight at all with great mass of British public opinion or had any influence except with a section of the

intelligentsia and of London opinion as distinct from the country, and that, even if there were through unforeseen circumstances any change in leadership, no British Government would be able to resist the popular opposition of the British people to aggression as distinct from defence. All were, on the other hand, united as regards defence. At the same time, I drew the Field-Marshal's attention to our apprehensions of Germany's intentions in view of her unremitting and immense war preparations. She was working all out in this direction just as if Munich had never been. Field-Marshal Göring's answer was that German military activities had just begun to cease when we began feverishly to rearm but it was true that thereafter theirs had begun in self-defence again just as actively as before.

After some recrimination on this point I mentioned to Field-Marshal Göring a remark which the Prime Minister had made to me when in London as to impossibility of our two countries going on indefinitely on these lines. The Field-Marshal entirely agreed. Though her rearmaments, he said, cost Germany less than England, she was a far poorer country, so that it came to the same thing. There was an immense amount to do in Germany and the Führer had, he said, vast plans for beautifying of Germany and improvement of social conditions just as the British Prime Minister had and his one desire was to prosecute them in peace.

I venture to quote these remarks at some length because I am convinced myself that they were quite sincere. My definite impression since my return here is that Herr Hitler does not contemplate any adventures at the moment and that all stories and rumours to the contrary are completely without real foundation. That Memel will eventually and possibly sooner rather than later revert to Germany is a foregone conclusion and a settlement as regards Danzig is equally so, Czecho-Slovakia may also be squeezed but in these respects I doubt whether Herr Hitler wishes to force the pace unless his own hand is forced. I believe in fact that he would now like in his heart to return to the fold of comparative respectability. As the Field-Marshal said to me this morning tyrants who go against the will of their people always come to a bad end.

These may sound strange opinions in the light of all rumours current during the past few months but I take full responsibility for making them mine. I regard and always have regarded it as a bad mistake to attribute excessive importance to stories spread generally with intention either by those who regard war as the only weapon with which Nazi régime can be overthrown or by those Nazis themselves who desire war for their own satisfaction or aggrandisement. Germany is not going to be a lamb with which it will be pleasant in the future to lie down but her people want peace just as much as and even more than ourselves and Herr Hitler is not going to disappoint them if he can help it. When the Field-Marshal spoke to me in this sense today I recalled to mind the similar remark made to me on February 15 by Herr Ribbentrop (see my telegram No. 61¹). I observed in that telegram that I believed Herr Hitler himself to be the author of this

¹ No. 109.

standpoint and after my conversation with the Field-Marshal I am still more convinced of it. It is a new frame of mind for which the enthusiasm of the German people for Mr. Chamberlain (which Field-Marshal Göring referred to) is probably largely responsible.

I saw State Secretary Weizsäcker yesterday.² His view also was that there would be no difficulties this year of a nature to lead to serious conflict between us like last year. I also happened to meet Herr Hitler himself at one of the British stands at the motor exhibition yesterday. For what that is worth his few remarks to me were exceedingly friendly.

In my opinion consequently it would be as useful publicly both in press and speeches to stress our full reliance on Herr Hitler's peaceful intentions as it is harmful to show suspicion of them. We can go on preparing for defence just the same while emphasizing the strictly non-aggressive nature of our rearmament.

² See No. 119.

No. 119

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 24)

No. 225 [C 2313/16/18]

BERLIN, February 18, 1939

My Lord,

I called yesterday on State Secretary Weizsäcker in whose sincerity and straightforwardness, as proven during the crisis of last September, I place considerable confidence.

2. I asked him about his own future. He said that he had read in the English papers two months ago that he was to be transferred as Ambassador to Warsaw.¹ He had had himself no official confirmation of the fact nor was there, so far as he knew, any probability of an early move for him. He told me that Herr von Ribbentrop had now collected all the threads of foreign policy into his own hands and warned me that it was essential that everything should be done direct through him in future. He said that he himself entirely approved of this concentration since any other system only produced confusion and resentments. Baron von Neurath had been far too easy going in this respect. We agreed that no one was better qualified to appreciate the inconveniences of outside intrigue than Herr von Ribbentrop himself. But I added that I had been much impressed by the greater calmness and self-assurance of the latter when I had seen him on the 15th. I regarded that as an augury of better things in the future. Baron von Weizsäcker said that he was relieved to hear it and altogether he seemed happier than I have sometimes known him.

3. I also told him that, while I was grateful for his warning, I had already appreciated its wisdom and when I had seen Herr von Ribbentrop two or three days before I had been careful to mention that I proposed to see Field-

¹ It has not been possible to trace the report to which Baron von Weizsäcker referred.

Marshal Göring at the end of the week to talk over in principle the question of the visit of an Air Mission to Germany. There would be no more question of going behind Herr von Ribbentrop's back so long as his own actions were reasonable.

4. I asked Baron von Weizsäcker how he envisaged the future. He replied at once that he foresaw no questions arising this year of such a nature as to lead to the risk of serious conflict between our two countries. Signor Mussolini's demands on France were limited (i.e. not territorial) and not in his opinion at all unreasonable, and he hoped that the French Government would be wise enough to appreciate this and come to an amicable arrangement with Italy.

I have, &c.,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 120

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 19, 1.45 p.m.)

No. 65 *Telegraphic* [C 2102/16/18]

BERLIN, February 19, 1939, 12.54 p.m.

I mentioned to Field-Marshal Göring this morning¹ that I had heard that he was inviting a British Air Mission to return visit paid by General Milch to England in 1937. He said 'what kind of a Mission'? I replied it was a question of the Chief of Air Staff and that I understood invitation had been given through German Air Attaché at London.

The Field-Marshal said that he would welcome such a mission but that it would be better to defer its coming till the weather was more suitable, in April for instance.

As the Field-Marshal told me that he was leaving early in March for a long and complete rest during which he was going to wash his hands completely of all business and politics I made no reference however to Secretary of State for Air.

¹ This telegram would appear to have been drafted on February 18.

No. 121

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 20, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 24 *Telegraphic* [N 902/57/38]

MOSCOW, February 19, 1939, 11.13 p.m.

New (? French Ambassador)¹ who is only staying a few days after presenting his credentials has been most active and had interview with M. Molotov. I asked M. Litvinov today whether the Ambassador had succeeded in dispelling that belief in French and British weak and 'capitulating policy' on which the local press to my regret dilates every day.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

2. M. Litvinov said that assurances had been given as regards French policy in general and Franco-Soviet Pact in particular but that nowadays assurances were freely given and as freely broken. Soviet Government and public opinion saw no signs whatever that France and Great Britain would do anything but continue to capitulate; Soviet Union would therefore 'keep aloof' all the more readily as their interests were not directly threatened. The French and British policy as regards Spain was the height of folly from a purely selfish point of view. On my expressing doubt whether the Franco régime would necessarily prove as subservient to Rome-Berlin Axis as he maintained M. Litvinov said that he knew as a fact that Germany and Italy and Japan had recently pressed General Franco to join the anti-Comintern Pact and that the latter had promised to do so after he had first obtained French and British recognition. Everywhere French and British interests were being surrendered as in Hainan for instance;² M. Bonnet was a natural capitulator; and the Soviet Government which had so often in the past tried to help the western democracies by, *inter alia*, advice from him personally at Geneva, now had no option but to . . .³ us to our own folly. 'Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini are as frightened of war as you are but they now know from experience that you will never fight.'

3. I said that others had made similar mistakes in 1914 as regards Great Britain and that foreign observers would be better advised to notice the gradual hardening of British public opinion and the progress of our re-armament to which the Soviet press paid little attention. I ended by pointing out that history gave many examples of apparent folly on our part but that nevertheless any group of nations to which we adhered had always come out on top in major conflicts.

4. I should add that M. Litvinov who spoke most frankly limited his more specific accusations to the French and not ourselves.

² The reference is presumably to the Japanese occupation of Hainan on February 10.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 122

Sir R. Lindsay (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 76 Telegraphic [C 2431/15/18]

WASHINGTON, February 20, 1939, 5.51 p.m.

Secretary of State being absent ill I saw Under-Secretary of State today and handed to him the contents of your telegram No. 81.¹ He gave me an account of what had passed between United States Ambassador and the Prime Minister on February 16² and had been pleased at the calm tone of the latter's language on the European situation but would have been more pleased if he had not almost simultaneously received very disquieting reports

¹ No. 113.

² It has been impossible to trace any British record of this interview.

from other sources. He had been told direct by French General Staff that the Italians had 300,000 men mobilised already and that number will have risen to one million by the end of this month. The Germans had sent numbers of military technicians to Libya as well as mechanised armaments and even some infantry. They had six divisions in Austria ready at a moment's notice to enter Italy and move to the French frontier (incidentally this item was volunteered last week to a member of my staff in New York by an anti-Nazi German banker) and had already sent in between 400 to 500 modern heavy guns. It was to be expected that about the end of February the Italians would formulate their demands on the French Government and that crisis would come in the middle of March and that by the end of the month war is more likely than peace.

He also said he is now convinced that the Japanese Government has now come into line with German and Italian Governments over the new Anti-Comintern Pact and that now all three are ready to play into each others hands. On the other hand his information from The Hague is that the Netherlands Government does not take pessimistic view. They say that popular feeling in Germany against war is growing ever stronger though they are not sure whether extremists allow this to get through to Herr Hitler. Also that the German railways are in such a state of dilapidation as to be a dangerous element in case of war.

I think the Under-Secretary of State was distinctly impressed by this gloomy news. He had telegraphed it to the President who had received it in his train on his way south and it had provoked the language used by him on February 18 as reported in the press.³ He himself rather regretted this language. The President intended nothing more than to ensure that if he did have to return here earlier than the announced date he should be able to do so without unduly disturbing opinion (that at least is what the Under-Secretary of State said).

³ Before embarking for a fortnight's cruise with the U.S. fleet, President Roosevelt had told the press that reports reaching him from the State Department reflected the disturbed international situation, and he might be forced to return to Washington sooner than he had intended.

No. 123

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 23)

No. 42 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2279/7/12]

PRAGUE, February 20, 1939

It is officially announced that General Krejci, the Chief of the General Staff, has resigned his office on grounds of ill-health.

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs' Chef de Cabinet today whether this was the result of German pressure. He admitted that the German Government had on several occasions mentioned the question of the General's continuance in office but said that the real reason for his resignation was that it was in fact impossible for so ardent a supporter of the old tradition to

remain head of the Army in the changing circumstances, more particularly when the whole function of the Army was to be recast. The foregoing is confirmed by a conversation which the Air Attaché had today at the General Staff.

3. I also learn on good authority at joint meeting of Central, Slovak and Ruthenian Ministers last week there was a heated debate as to whether certain members of the Cabinet associated with the late régime should not be dropped as was, according to the story, being urged by German Government. The Slovaks are said to have supported the suggestion but to have been defeated by joint efforts of MM. Syrový, Beran and Chvalkovský. Nevertheless it is not unreasonable to connect General Krejčí's resignation with that discussion.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 124

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 24)

No. 84 [C 2319/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 20, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that German minority questions have been a good deal to the fore during the past week or so and the Sudeten German paper 'Zeit', which is now published in Reichenberg, has been renewing its old complaints that the Czechs are actuated by ill-will towards the German population of this country. It is alleged that, despite the professions of the present Government, the Benes spirit has not yet been forgotten by the local Czech officials. Incidentally, the 'Volksdeutsche Zeitung', which has just published its opening number as the official organ of the German 'Volksgruppe', estimates the total number of the minority as being something between 420,000 and 500,000.

2. Herr Kundt, the leader of the German 'Volksgruppe', is showing great activity. In a speech to his party's Parliamentary Club on the 13th February, he declared that it was an error to believe that the Germans were better off than before the 1st October, 1938. In certain respects—for example, in the economic and social spheres—conditions were even worse, and it seemed as though the Czechs were trying to force the German population out of their historical position and compel them to opt for the Reich. Such an attitude could not be maintained and would be resisted with all possible strength, but hitherto he had found the responsible Czech officials only actuated by the old spirit of procrastination.

3. On the 17th February Herr Kundt made another speech at a ceremony held in the Deutsches Haus in Prague to reopen the German cultural society known as the 'Urania', whose activities had ceased since the crisis last year. The occasion was evidently regarded as an important one, for the meeting was attended by representatives not only of the German but also of the Italian Legation. On this occasion Herr Kundt spoke about the German cultural

mission, which, he said, must, of course, be conducted on purely National Socialist lines. To-day was no longer the era of Goethe; it was the Hitler era, and Herr Hitler had, in November, dispelled all doubts among the Germans in Czecho-Slovakia when he declared that the oldest German university remained in Prague. Turning to relations with the Czechs, he said that they would be welcome as guests of the society, but on one condition: that they did not regard the Germans as enemies, but rather as natural members of the country, not as German-speaking Czecho-Slovaks, but as representatives of the historical spirit of Germany and of the spirit of National Socialism. He demanded that the Czechs should treat the German members of the State to-day in the tradition of the old Bohemian kings, who had ordered, for example, that the Germans in Bohemia should live according to the laws of the Germans and be free men. Herr Kundt, for his part, demanded that the Germans should be free men and be able to live, work and develop according to their German National Socialist beliefs, their National Socialist laws, their National Socialist customs, and their National Socialist justice in private as well as in public life, in self-administration and co-determination¹ under their own leadership. In that spirit he held out his hand to the Czechs. But there must be no half-measures. National Socialism knew no compromise on principles. The time was ripe for action, for history did not wait.

4. Herr Kundt's speeches and the accompanying growls from the German papers are so painfully reminiscent of the situation last year that I was somewhat surprised to find the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with whom I had a short conversation on the 19th February, not unduly perturbed or pessimistic of reaching an agreement with Herr Kundt. At any rate, he was convinced that the present Government were right to do all in their power to come to terms with him—a sentiment in which I ventured to concur when he asked my opinion.

5. Meanwhile, the first meeting between the representatives of the Government and of the German minority took place on the 16th February. A communiqué issued by the German Labour Office stated that questions of a general and particular nature had been discussed with regard to social policy, internal administration, culture and schools. The next meeting was arranged for the 23rd February, and in the meantime sub-committees of experts would meet to prepare proposals for the Government.

6. On the Czech side, it is said that Herr Kundt's present passion for publicity is largely due to the fact that he does not feel very sure of his own position. It is admitted that he is for the moment trusted by Berlin, but he is said to be on bad terms with his former associates of the Henlein party and not too secure in his relations with the German minority remaining in Czecho-Slovakia. But it is not altogether surprising that he takes his position as leader of the German 'Volksgruppe' seriously, for minorities to-day form one of the essential elements in the policy of the Reich, and it may be anticipated

¹ *Note in original:* 'Mitbestimmung'—a word not found in the dictionary and apparently coined for the occasion. *Editorial note:* The usual German term for 'share in control', i.e. in the direction of the State.

that any arrangements reached as to the position of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia will be used as a precedent for exacting similar privileges for the German minorities in other countries. That, at any rate, is the view of the Czechs, and their views on German designs are not to be lightly disregarded.

7. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

No. 125

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 24)

No. 67 [N 1008/57/38]

MOSCOW, February 20, 1939

My Lord,

In the course of the conversation reported in my telegram No. 24¹ of yesterday's date, M. Litvinov explained to me that the Soviet press was in no way under direct Government guidance and control, subject only to the proper restrictions on subversive or misguided political agitation. As I had no intention of entering on a futile discussion, I did not comment on this *cliché*. But when his Excellency went on to say that Soviet press allegations about Great Britain's weakness and 'capitulatory policy' were merely faithful reproductions of what was written in the British newspapers, set down with a minimum of prejudice, I could not refrain from asking him whether he had recently read the 'Krasnaya Zvezda', a military organ. On his answering in the negative, I told him my little story, and passed on quickly to other matters.

2. The incident, however, is of some small value as a journalistic curiosity, and I have therefore the honour to enclose a translation of the relevant extract.²

3. On the 15th February the 'Krasnaya Zvezda' published a review by a Colonel Kuznetsov of a Russian reference book, entitled 'The Armed Forces of the British Empire', in which impressive figures were given of our actual and potential military power. The reviewer did his best to pay homage to certain prejudices by references to capitulation, but indicated that we had the power if only we were men enough to use it. Nevertheless, the paper published two days later an editorial note apologising for the oversight which had allowed such a misguided article to appear; for Great Britain, it seems, has neither the power nor the spirit.

4. I might add that, on applying to an appropriate army bookshop for a copy of the work in question, a member of my staff was informed that the volume had not yet been published and was still in process of printing.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

¹ No. 121.

² Not printed.

*Letter from Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Mr. Strang
(Received February 25)*

[C 2340/19/18]

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, February 20, 1939

I called on Masarik on the 18th February to give him the message contained in your telegram No. 20.¹ He was immensely grateful for your good offices, so much so that he took me in to see Chvalkovsky who, he said, wished to express his thanks himself.

2. Having done so Chvalkovsky began talking about the situation in general. He spoke with moderate optimism about both the external and internal positions. Externally, relations with Poland seemed to be improving and he regarded Teleki's appointment in Hungary² as encouraging as they were old friends and the fact that Teleki had been second Hungarian delegate at the time of the Vienna arbitration would make it peculiarly difficult for him to try to upset the award as regards Ruthenia. Nor did he think that Germany would allow the award to be upset. Internally he said that things seemed to be gradually settling down in the country and that people were beginning to realise that the Government's policy of friendship with Germany was the only one practicable in the circumstances, and similarly that the Government were right to negotiate with Kundt on the position of the German minority. But it was not very easy to change in a few months an attitude of hostility to everything German which had been ingrained in the population for so long.

3. He then turned to the attitude of Germany towards this country and said that it was a mistake to think, as many people did, that Germany wanted to be absolute masters [*sic*] of Czecho-Slovakia. (I may mention that the Czechs do not appreciate the emphasis laid on the vassal State idea, for example, in Parliament last week.) Germany's interest as regards the Czechs was that they should be neutral, so that she could rest assured that if she were herself in danger she need feel no fear on the Czecho-Slovak front. Ribbentrop had told him that he would like Czecho-Slovakia to be a kind of Denmark or Switzerland in that respect—a country which, if it possessed an army at all, did not possess one which could possibly be strong enough to embarrass Germany. And in fact the Czecho-Slovak Government *were* going to reduce their army.

4. The idea of neutrality, Chvalkovsky went on, seemed to him one which should be followed up as being the only policy compatible with the interests of his country, and he had been turning over in his mind whether the Czecho-Slovak Government could not make a declaration of neutrality, somewhat on the Belgian model of two years ago.³ It might be a first step towards the

¹ Not printed. The message in question dealt with economic support for Czech interests in connexion with the Vitkovice iron-works.

² Count Teleki became Hungarian Prime Minister on February 16.

³ See Volume III of this Series, No. 325, note 2.

guarantee promised at Munich, or indeed part of the guarantee, and he asked me to find out how London would regard such a declaration. He did not wish to proceed with the idea unless he was assured of the prior blessing of the four Munich Powers. Germany would, he believed, welcome it, and he would now like to know the reaction of His Majesty's Government. He emphasised that he was not making an official approach. Indeed he had not expected to see me at all that day. He was merely sounding the ground in an entirely unofficial way. It is for that reason that I report his remarks to me by semi-official letter rather than by official despatch. I should mention that Chvalkovsky was not very precise in his remarks and in particular went into no details as to the form in which his idea might take shape. He spoke indeed of the Belgian model, but of course the expression 'neutrality' was not used in the declarations about Belgium, which in any case were made by other Governments and not by the Belgian Government, though the ball was started rolling by King Leopold's speech on October 14, 1936, in which he did refer to the 'proud and firm example of Holland and Switzerland'. However Chvalkovsky was thinking at the moment of the principle, not of legal forms.

5. On the 20th February I had a talk with Masarik, Chvalkovsky's Chef de Cabinet, who explained to me somewhat more fully what is in Chvalkovsky's mind. He said that every access of nervousness in Berlin, whether arising from internal or external worries, immediately had its first repercussions in Prague. Being the nearest and easiest to hit, the Czechs were always the first sufferers from any attack of irritation in Germany. New demands were made upon them or they were accused of harbouring designs against the Reich (compare what Ribbentrop said to Bonnet in December—your despatch to Paris No. 2802⁴ of the 13th December). Chvalkovsky accordingly felt that something must be done, and as quickly as possible, to reassure Germany that her suspicions with regard to this country were unfounded. The guarantee was apparently in cold storage, so the idea of a declaration of neutrality had struck him as being a step which Czechoslovakia could take on her own initiative to dispel doubts as to her loyalty. He was also approaching the French and Italian Ministers as he had approached me.

6. So far as I was concerned I confined myself to the part of listener in both the foregoing conversations, as I have no authority to inform the Czechs even in confidence of the various steps we have taken in the guarantee question in Paris, Rome and Berlin. So I refrained from mentioning, for example, that when on the 12th January Mussolini said to the Prime Minister that Czechoslovakia really must be neutral before the guarantee could be given, Mr. Chamberlain replied that that had always been the idea of the British Government.⁵

7. I have since had a talk with the French Minister on the subject. Somewhat to my surprise he told me that, though Chvalkovsky had on occasion aired the idea of neutrality with him, he had spoken far more vaguely to him

⁴ See Volume III of this Series, No. 427.

⁵ Ibid., No. 500, section (3).

even than he had to me, and had not asked him to sound Paris about the idea. De Lacroix added that for his part he was inclined to think that Germany had since Munich so far extended her tentacles over this country that it could not any longer be a properly neutral State. He cited the arrangements reached whereby German troops and war material can be transported across Czecho-Slovakia and said that supposing Germany and Italy were at war with Great Britain and France, it would be the reverse of neutrality if Czecho-Slovakia allowed Germany to reinforce the Italians over Czech roads and railways, as she would no doubt be made to do. I gather that he has expressed views on these lines to Paris.

8. The Minister gets back in a few days' time and Chvalkovsky will no doubt take an early opportunity to tackle him on the subject, so it would be useful if you could let him have a reply to this letter at your early convenience.

J. M. TROUTBECK

P.S. I am sending copies of this letter to Sir N. Henderson, Sir E. Phipps and Lord Perth.

No. 127

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 22)

No. 74 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2223/8/18]

BERLIN, February 21, 1939

Prominence is given in the press of February 20 to the news that Mr. Stanley and Mr. Hudson are coming to Berlin in connexion with the Anglo-German trade talks beginning next month, and that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin is already on his way to Berlin.¹ It is considered that the importance of strengthening Anglo-German trade relations and avoiding unhealthy competition on the markets of third parties will be considerably enhanced through the announcement of the visit of the Ministers.

In comment on the coming conversations, the 'National Zeitung' writes that both the German and British industrial organisations had felt for some time that an attempt should be made to improve the whole line of Anglo-German economic relations. The hopes raised by the conclusion last year of the economic agreement had not been realised. Germany had waited in vain for increased purchases by Great Britain of German industrial finished goods, and she had therefore been unable to import larger quantities of British raw materials.

England, it is stated, was pointing to Anglo-German competition in the Balkans as a factor which was preventing full use being made of the Anglo-German economic agreement; and London could not bring itself to recognize Great Germany as being, for natural and traditional reasons, the leading supplier of the Balkan States. England was also refusing to recognise the fact that the times for the giving of political credits were over.

It is therefore to be welcomed, the 'National Zeitung' continues, that

¹ For Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's visit to Berlin see Appendix II.

sound common sense is now apparently beginning to overcome these misunderstandings. English business men are apparently realizing that good business is more necessary than bad manœuvring, and the Ministers responsible for England's trade and export are perhaps beginning to understand that Great Germany cannot be cut off from important economic spheres which may in the past have been controlled from London.

Concluding, the 'National Zeitung' says that Germany would welcome an improvement in her economic relations with England and an increase in her exports to the United Kingdom, and that she is therefore looking forward with interest to the meeting of the Industrial Federations of the two countries, and that she will support the efforts of the official representatives of the British Government.

No. 128

Letter from Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Sir L. Oliphant

[N 1019/1019/38]

BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, February 21, 1939

Dear Oliphant,

You will have seen from my telegram No. 25¹ of February 19 that the Soviet Government whom I approached in the person of Litvinov (who duly consulted the People's Commissar of Foreign Trade) have announced their readiness to receive Hudson.²

I must confess that Litvinov, while obviously pleased at the idea of a visit, only looked glum when I said how discussions on improvement of trade were the sanest and most useful branch of international affairs. The rumours of a possible denunciation of our Trade Agreement must be causing this Government some considerable concern, and I feel that they cannot be as confident of the strength of their position as Maiski made out to me in London or to Butler at his recent interview.³ When he talked of the political effect of a denunciation Maiski presumably meant that it might drive the Soviet Union into the arms of Germany: this is of course an old Soviet gambit and need not be taken too seriously. Both on their side and on ours the question of the Trade Agreement must be looked at from a purely 'business' point of view.

I suppose we shall hear soon what subjects Hudson means to bring up. Perhaps the question of the Soviet Union as a supplier of commodities to one side or another in the event of a European war in which the Union was neutral? If so, please look at a letter⁴ going by this bag from the Chancery

¹ Not printed.

² The Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons on February 20 that Mr. Hudson would pay a visit to Moscow, among other northern capitals, during the latter half of March. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 344, cols. 16-17. Mr. Hudson visited Warsaw, Moscow, Helsingfors, and Stockholm.

³ See No. 103.

⁴ See Appendix III. The Coordination Section of the Foreign Office dealt with the preparation in peace time of measures to be applied in the event of the outbreak of war.

to the Coordination Section. The conclusions reached are that, in the circumstances described, the Soviet Union would be guided almost entirely by considerations of political expediency in deciding whether or not to withhold certain commodities and services from Germany and whether or not to furnish them to the allies; that the means of exerting pressure on the Soviet Union at our disposal would be most ineffective; and, finally, that, with certain exceptions, such as oil and manganese, the quantities of raw materials available in this country for export are not sufficient to make the question one of vital importance.

I shall of course be very glad to have Hudson as our guest here and hope we shall soon learn the dates of his visit and the names of anyone accompanying him.

WILLIAM SEEDS

No. 129

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 63 Telegraphic [C 1707/281/17]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 22, 1939, 1.0 p.m.*

My telegram No. 25.¹

1. I find it rather difficult to understand why the French Government, who are usually so anxious to push ahead with conversations between our two Staffs, should have so long delayed an answer to the enquiry you were instructed to put to them. I trust that they are not proposing to use this occasion to suggest in their reply the conclusion of more binding political agreements between the two countries, or to re-state their arguments in favour of the introduction of compulsory military service in this country. Any such action on their part would produce an unfortunate impression here and would not create the best atmosphere for the inauguration of the new conversations. As my immediately succeeding telegram² shows, the scope we propose for the conversations ought to be wide enough to satisfy even the French General Staff.

2. I shall be glad if you will do what you can to expedite a reply from the French Government to our communication, and to ensure that the reply, when it comes, is not of a nature to embarrass us.

3. In my immediately succeeding telegram I have set out the procedure we contemplate for the forthcoming conversations between the two Staffs. When the French reply is received, if it amounts to a simple affirmative, or calls for no comment, you should make a communication to the French Government in the sense of my immediately succeeding telegram. If, however, the French reply should raise new issues, or should, in your view, require further consideration, you should defer making any new communication to the French Government pending instructions.

¹ No. 81.

² No. 133.

No. 130

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 68 Telegraphic [N 957/411/38]

BERLIN, February 22, 1939, 1.50 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 18.¹

A member of my staff has been informed by Herr Wiehl² that in negotiations of last autumn German delegation had suggested that in addition to an arrangement for current trade Germany should give fresh commercial credit to Russia. Soviet delegation was not at the time prepared for this proposal and discussion was postponed owing to absence of Russian trade commissioner at Berlin, M. Davidov. As M. Davidov's return was delayed German Government proposed to send Herr Schnurre to Moscow to prepare the ground but Herr Schnurre was recalled while *en route* owing to press excitement caused by his journey. Instead preparatory discussions are proceeding between German Embassy in Moscow and Soviet Government and definite discussions will be taken up on M. Davidov's return to Berlin.

See also my immediately following telegram.³

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 71.

² Dr. Wiehl was Chief of the Economic Section of the German Foreign Office.

³ No. 131.

No. 131

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 69 Telegraphic [N 958/64/63]

BERLIN, February 22, 1939, 1.50 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Herr Wiehl has commented to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin² on the fact that Mr. Hudson was apparently paying only a flying call to Berlin on his way to conduct negotiations in Moscow. He thought this was bound to give rise to unfavourable comment here and he mentioned in this connexion a press report of a recent statement ascribed to you to the effect that it was time that there should be closer relations between Great Britain and Soviet Union. It was explained to Herr Wiehl that negotiations which we had in view with U.S.S.R. were of a non-political character and aimed at persuading Russians to buy more British manufactured goods also that Mr. Hudson's visit was part of a tour to certain northern capitals in the interest of development of British trade. Herr Wiehl thought that for political reasons Soviet Union would be delighted at this opportunity to negotiate with United Kingdom especially in view of suspension of Herr Schnurre's visit.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 130.

² Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin was visiting Berlin. See Appendix II.

No. 132

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 67 Telegraphic [C 2224/19/18]

BERLIN, February 22, 1939, 1.52 p.m.

Your telegram No. 11 Saving.¹

Enquiries have been made of Dr. Kuokal [*sic* ? Koukal], Czecho-Slovak signatory of the Optants Agreement, on point raised in paragraph 2 of your telegram under reference. He stated that Ministry of Interior in Prague was the only authority able to provide approximate figure of optants up to date. He pointed out that the time limit did not expire until March 29 next and that so far as he knew members [*sic* ? numbers] who had opted for Germany were very small. As regards the working of the Agreement Dr. Kuokal [*sic* ? Koukal] stated that up to the present it had been fairly smooth, although of course no progress had yet been made in regard to points covered by Articles 12 and 13. He explained very confidentially that the German Government had not been over-helpful in giving precise instructions to their local authorities as regards the procedure for those desiring to opt for Czech nationality. Further, certain points connected with persons of Jewish nationality had not yet been settled.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 107.

No. 133

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 64 Telegraphic [C 1707/281/17]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 22, 1939, 3.30 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Following is procedure we suggest for forthcoming conversations between British and French staffs:—

(a) Conversations on our side would be conducted by members of the Joint Planning Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, who have the ranks of Captain, Brigadier, and Group Captain respectively. We suggest that the French should send representatives of approximately similar standing;

(b) Conversations would be held in London;

(c) Conversations would cover all possible theatres of war in which joint action or operations by ourselves and the French are possible. (This modifies paragraph 1 (a) of my telegram No. 25² inasmuch as the Far East would now be included);

(d) Conversations would proceed by stages as follows:—

(i) *1st stage*: Discussion with the French of our general strategical con-

¹ No. 129.

² No. 81.

ception of a war in which Great Britain and France were engaged as allies against Germany and Italy. Our representatives propose to hand to the French representatives at an early stage in the proceedings a memorandum showing in bold outline the strategical picture as we see it. We suggest that the French should be invited to reciprocate with a similar paper giving their point of view. It will clearly not be possible to proceed to detailed discussions until agreement has been reached as to the fundamental conception which should govern our joint action.

(ii) *2nd stage*: Discussion in broad outline of plans in the several theatres of operations;

(iii) *3rd stage*: Preparation of detailed joint plans.

2. Please inform the French Government of foregoing and ask whether they agree. We should also be glad to know the names of their representatives and the date on which they would propose to arrive.

3. You should also assure the French Government that His Majesty's Government embark upon these conversations with sincere desire that they should be of maximum mutual profit. Our representatives will accordingly have authority to impart to their French colleagues all the information as to our plans and resources that is necessary to ensure co-ordination in peace and efficient co-operation in war. We naturally assume that the French representatives will reciprocate.

4. It is the wish of His Majesty's Government that the proposed meetings between the representatives of the two Staffs should be kept as inconspicuous as possible, and that publicity should be avoided. The importance of this is being impressed upon all concerned on this side, and we trust that the French Government will give similar instructions. (It is particularly desirable that these instructions should be given to members of the French Embassy in London, some of whom have a bad reputation for indiscretion when talking to the press. I must leave it to you to decide how best to secure this result.)

No. 134

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 41 Telegraphic [C 2241/17/18]

PRAGUE, February 22, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs have sent me a copy of an *aide-mémoire*¹ said to have been submitted on February 22 to the British, German, French and Italian Governments by Czecho-Slovak representatives in those countries declaring Czecho-Slovakia's readiness to make a declaration of neutrality.

A letter to Mr. Strang² recording the Minister for Foreign Affairs' remarks to me on this question left by bag yesterday, copies being sent to posts concerned.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Rome.

¹ See No. 138.

² No. 126.

No. 135

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 6.45 p.m.)

No. 70 Telegraphic [C 2243/15/18]

BERLIN, February 22, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

Netherlands Minister who was recently appointed here from Washington called on me yesterday and gave me account of talk which he had had with Field-Marshal Göring just before my interview with the latter on February 19.

Field-Marshal Göring had, he said, inveighed in strong terms against America and to less extent British press which he described as inciting Western Powers to war against Germany. If this campaign persisted German Government, he said, would have to consider whether it would not be more opportune to take action now themselves before it was too late and while Germany was still in stronger military position.

I told Netherlands Minister that I believed this in fact to be argument with which the Nazi extremists sought to justify their policy of adventure. In my own opinion it constituted the origin of most of the recent war scares. At the same time I did not believe Herr Hitler was today on the side of the extremists as he had been last summer. Nevertheless one of the dangers of the situation was lest press campaigns and utterances of irresponsible individuals should lend the appearance of right to that section in Germany which was trying to prove to Herr Hitler that British rearmament plan had ulterior aggressive object and that it was better therefore to make war this year than wait till Western Powers chose their own moment.

I gave the Minister some account of my talk with Field-Marshal Göring (see my telegram No. 64¹) which in some respects fitted in with what the latter had said to him. Incidentally Field-Marshal Göring had also said to the Minister that no ruler can act all the time contrary to the wishes of his people and remain their ruler. I observed in this connexion that I based my comparative optimism not only on average Italian as well as German peoples . . .² to war but also on Mr. Chamberlain. So long as he was in office I did not believe Herr Hitler could be persuaded that British military preparations had any aggressive object.

¹ No. 118.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 136

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 23)

No. 95 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2239/281/17]

PARIS, February 22, 1939

Your telegram No. 63¹ of February 22, received this afternoon.

I reminded M. Bonnet this morning that I still awaited the promised answer in writing of the French Government. He again promised to send it very shortly.

¹ No. 129.

On February 20 the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay raised this question with His Majesty's Minister, saying that the reply had been already drafted and only needed Ministerial approval. We should receive it within the next 48 hours. The delay had been due to the wish of the French Government to treat the matter with special secrecy and therefore to consult the other interested departments orally and not on paper. He could assure Mr. Campbell that the answer was favourable. There were only certain *précisions* of a technical kind which had had to be gone into and which were dealt with in the Ministry's written reply to the Embassy's memorandum of February 3.

No. 137

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 354 [C 2242/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 22, 1939*

Sir,

The German Ambassador called to see me this afternoon at his own request before leaving for Germany, where he expected to be about a fortnight. He was going, so he told me, principally in connexion with some exhibition of Japanese art of which he is president. The Ambassador spoke with warm appreciation of the various developments that had taken place since we last met in the economic field: the coal trade agreement,¹ the forthcoming in-

¹ In November 1938 a memorandum on German 'price-cutting' in the coal export trade was drawn up in the Mines Department of the Board of Trade and communicated to representatives of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a visit to London. This memorandum pointed out that the coal export trade from Great Britain was being adversely affected by the German policy of subsidising the export of coal at uneconomic prices. His Majesty's Government considered that they would have to take measures to subsidise British coal exports if the German subsidies continued at their existing level. They recognised that such action would lead to a 'price-cutting' war which would damage not only the coal export trade but other industries in the United Kingdom and Germany. His Majesty's Government therefore proposed the establishment of an international coal cartel to secure an equitable distribution of world markets for all the coal-exporting countries of Europe.

After negotiations between representatives of the British and German coal industries, with the approval of the two Governments, a general agreement was reached at the end of January 1939, on the respective British and German shares in the export trade (see Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, col. 3). It was suggested, with the approval of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that Dr. Funk, President of the Reichsbank and Minister for Economics, should be invited to attend a dinner in London to celebrate the conclusion of the agreement. Dr. Funk did not accept this invitation, but the German Government through the German Embassy in London, invited Mr. Stanley, President of the Board of Trade, to Berlin. Mr. Stanley agreed to accept the invitation to Berlin, but his visit had not taken place before the German violation of the Munich Agreement. Meanwhile negotiations had been opened between the Federation of British Industries and the German Reichsgruppe Industrie on the question of agreements to avoid uneconomic price-cutting, &c., in other industries: a meeting of British and German representatives was held at Dusseldorf on March 15-16. (See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 1105-9.)

These negotiations, and Mr. Stanley's visit to Berlin, were postponed by His Majesty's Government after the German violation of the Munich Agreement.

dustrial discussions, the visit of the President of the Board of Trade to Berlin, had all given satisfaction to the German Government, and it was the Ambassador's own view that, following upon the prominence given to economic questions in Herr Hitler's last speech, all these several items were of cumulative value.

2. I asked his Excellency what his own impressions were at the present moment on the general situation. He said that he had been greatly struck by the effect of rumours in England three or four weeks ago which, so far as he had been able to trace them, he was inclined to attribute to the influence of the Stock Exchange in America and the Stock Exchange at Amsterdam. The uneasiness due to these rumours had appeared to him then to subside, but he seemed to have noticed in the last eight or ten days a recurrence of the same feelings of anxiety, and he was puzzled to know to what this was due. I told his Excellency that I had not myself noticed anything of the sort during the last week or ten days, but that there was no doubt a considerable state of tension in feeling, due to causes with which we were all quite familiar and which would not be exorcised merely by smooth words, helpful as these might be. I made full allowance for the fact that it was difficult for any country to believe that the armaments of another country were purely defensive, but, none the less, I would beg him to realise, and I hoped that his Government would realise, how great an impression had been produced upon British opinion by what appeared the deliberate failure of the German Government to maintain and take advantage of the new opportunities that we thought had been created at Munich. The Ambassador replied to this by saying that he thought Herr Hitler had resented the fact that we should have busied ourselves as much as we did with Czecho-Slovakia, which he regarded as a predominantly German affair, and that the position had been greatly embittered by the behaviour of the American President. That the head of a great country should make once a week, in some form or other, the kind of declaration that President Roosevelt had been making for some time past was very disturbing. It seemed quite evident that, if France and Great Britain were involved in war, America would also join in and support Great Britain, not in two months, but in two days. This naturally caused great concern to the German Government and they could not be blamed, therefore, for feeling that it was in present circumstances impossible for them to suspend their armaments production. I told the Ambassador that it was really too fantastic to suppose that any intelligent German could imagine that the United States proposed to attack Germany, or that anybody in England or France favoured the idea of a war for the sake of prevention. To this the Ambassador agreed, and said that he himself looked forward to the gradual diminution of tension under the soothing influence of economics, and that it might be, in six months or so, again possible, in a quieter atmosphere, to take up disarmament.

3. I then said that one of the principal points of anxiety in my mind was the attitude that the Italian Government were permitting the Italian press to adopt *vis-à-vis* France. If it was really the intention of the Italian Govern-

ment, as Signor Mussolini had said in Rome, not to do anything to aggravate the situation in Italo-French relations, he really was going the very worst way about it. Signor Mussolini had succeeded in doing what no Frenchman had lately done: creating a complete *union sacrée*, as M. Daladier had described it, which bound all France very closely together. If Signor Mussolini were ever tempted to think that there was any element of bluff in the French position, he would be making a most dangerous and costly mistake. The Ambassador assured me that he realised this perfectly well, but thought that, just because the situation was so plain, particularly having regard to what the Prime Minister had said on the 6th February, there was less danger of any serious trouble coming. Everybody now knew that, if Italy attacked France or if Germany attacked France, we should be immediately in, and, having regard also to what his Excellency had said earlier about the United States, there was no room for confusion in anybody's mind. This was, he thought, a steadying factor. I told him that I was very glad to hear him say this, because it seemed to me quite vital that in no quarter should there be any tendency to underrate the danger of playing with fire, when the consequences had been so plainly defined. I did not believe myself that Signor Mussolini wanted war, but I did think that the latitude that the Italian Government were permitting to the Italian press was dangerous and that most wars had started, not through deliberate design, but through people getting themselves into a position that they could not get out of. Accordingly I thought that any influence that the German Government could exercise on their Axis partner in the direction of reducing the temperature of the treatment of any question between Italy and France would be influence well exerted.

4. Before he left the Ambassador quoted, as an illustration of the difficulty the Germans were experiencing by reason of the feeling in England at the present time, some comments that had appeared in the press upon the intention of the German Government to make use of the late Austrian Legation in Belgrave Square for meetings from time to time of the German colony. It was unhappily the case that, since the Jewish troubles in Germany, they found it increasingly difficult to get public rooms for the purpose of dances or meetings, and that the ex-Austrian Legation was the only place available to them. They were proposing to use it for perfectly legitimate purposes, and such comment as that to which he referred was not calculated to improve feeling between the two countries. His Excellency was careful to say that he was not mentioning this matter by way of complaint so much as by way of illustration. I told the Ambassador that what he had just said only reinforced the necessity for the establishment of better relations between our two Governments, but he knew as well as I did how strongly British public opinion had been stirred by German action in regard to the Jews. Although the German Government might claim that this was a purely internal matter, it was one that, as he would readily understand, was bound to stir deep emotions in Great Britain. Anything, therefore, that the German Government could do to remove the unfortunate impression so created would be of value. For the rest, it was the duty of us all to work in whatever way we best

could to improve relations so that these consequences of bad relations might cease to arise.

5. As he was leaving, I asked the Ambassador whether a report that I had heard as to a possible desire of Herr von Ribbentrop to pay a visit to England was well founded. His Excellency said that he thought he would be very willing to come over if there were any question of signing any industrial agreement or anything of the sort, and that, contrary to what was frequently reported, Herr von Ribbentrop cherished no ill will to this country. I told his Excellency that, if and when Herr von Ribbentrop ever did feel inclined to find the occasion for such a visit, we should be very glad to welcome him, feeling that it was on all grounds desirable to maintain all the personal contacts that might offer.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 138

Note by Sir A. Cadogan

[C 2231/17/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 22, 1939

The Czecho-Slovak Chargé d'Affaires called on me this afternoon and left the annexed *aide-mémoire*. It is not quite clear from the last paragraph whether the Czecho-Slovak Government are in any case going to make a declaration of neutrality, or whether this is merely an intimation that they would do so in exchange for the offer of a suitable guarantee. The Czecho-Slovak Chargé d'Affaires said that, apart from the text of this *aide-mémoire*, he had received no instructions of any sort, and therefore he could not enlighten me on this point. Further discussion therefore seemed to be useless. I told him that we should probably carry on the discussion through His Majesty's Minister in Prague, but he begged that we should also keep him informed.

A. C.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 138

Aide-mémoire

LONDRES, le 22 février 1939

Dans l'annexe première de l'Accord de Munich en date du 29 septembre 1938 le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté dans le Royaume-Uni et le Gouvernement français ont déclaré qu'ils maintenaient l'offre contenue dans le paragraphe 6 des propositions franco-britanniques du 19 septembre 1938 touchant une garantie internationale des nouvelles frontières de l'État tchéco-slovaque contre toute agression non provoquée. L'Allemagne et l'Italie ont déclaré qu'elles donneront également leur garantie quand la question des minorités polonaise et hongroise en Tchéco-Slovaquie aura été réglée.

Le paragraphe 6 des propositions franco-britanniques du 19 septembre 1938 avait prévu qu'une des principales conditions d'une telle garantie serait

la sauvegarde de l'indépendance de l'État tchéco-slovaque par la substitution d'une garantie générale contre toute agression non provoquée, aux traités actuellement en vigueur et qui comportent des obligations réciproques de caractère militaire.

Dans le désir de faciliter aux Puissances signataires de l'Accord de Munich la mise en œuvre de cette garantie l'État tchéco-slovaque serait prêt à faire une déclaration solennelle concernant sa nouvelle position internationale comportant notamment l'engagement d'une stricte neutralité et de la non-immixtion absolue dans tous les différends éventuels des Puissances.

No. 139

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir O. Sargent

[C 2358/1321/55]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, February 22, 1939

Dear Sargent,

1. It may interest you to learn that both I and my French colleague see a distinct *revirement* in official opinion here in favour of France and ourselves. While one should not attach too much importance to such symptoms, this *revirement* has nevertheless shown itself not only in political but also in the economic field. For instance, my Commercial Counsellor reports that there is a very much greater demand for British goods which, were it not for restrictions, would have led to a distinct revival of trade with Great Britain. The Navy is believed to contemplate placing large orders in England, and we hope with the help of export credits to arrange a contract for the Grid system with British firms. I believe therefore that Hudson's visit will be very welcome in view of the Polish desire not to fall under German economic domination.

2. Both I and my staff notice amongst members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a distinctly forthcoming attitude. They were never anything but friendly, but recently have gone out of their way to cultivate us, and to express regret for any coolness in the dark days of last September. There is no doubt that Beck is anxious to go to London, not so much in connection with Danzig as he says, but to re-establish contact with leading personalities in London.

3. My French colleague has the same impressions as regards the Polish attitude towards France at the present time. He told me to-day that the Roumanian Ambassador had mentioned to him a conversation which he had had with the Polish Chief of Staff in which the latter had said that he was much impressed by the efforts being made both in England and France, and that he felt that in case of war, the German and Italian armies would be defeated. He talked disparagingly of Italian morale and spoke generally in terms very different from those he would have used last November. A French aviation mission which recently visited Poland has been very well received, and on all sides M. Noël is receiving expressions of satisfaction at the moral

recovery of France and at the progress which is being made in both England and France to resist the aggressive policy of the Berlin-Rome Axis.

4. On the cultural side which is also perhaps a touchstone, we have been surprised and gratified at the great success of our Art Exhibition and of various lectures, the resurrected Anglo-Polish Society, and the English language school.

5. On the other hand there have been several minor manifestations of the normal Polish dislike of Germany. The atmosphere between Polish and German officials at the party given for Ribbentrop was I am told glacial. As I reported in telegram No. 11 Saving,¹ reports of the arrest of members of the German minority in the frontier districts are leaking out into the press, though it is hard to get chapter and verse for them. The 'Danziger Vorposten' has been forbidden to be sold in Poland. I am also told, though I may not be able to confirm this before the bag goes tonight, that a semi-official news agency which circulates to provincial newspapers has given a 'directive' in connection with Ciano's forthcoming visit. It is to the effect that while Poland and Italy are great friends and the visit is most welcome, care must be taken not to identify Poland with any Italian claims on France, Poland's ally.

6. Clearly one must not exaggerate, but there is a general feeling that Colonel Beck is getting back on to the fence again and public opinion seems to be relieved that he should feel it both safe and advisable to do so.

Yours ever,

H. W. KENNARD

¹ No. 110.

No. 140

The German Ambassador to Mr. Chamberlain¹

[C 2500/19/18]

GERMAN EMBASSY, LONDON S.W.1, February 25, 1939

My dear Prime Minister,

When you were dining here last week you mentioned the right of option of the inhabitants of the Sudeten-German territories transferred to Germany in consequence of the Munich Agreement, a matter about which questions have been addressed to you in the House of Commons. I have looked into the matter and am now in a position to give you more particulars.

Paragraph 7 of the Munich Agreement provides that there will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories and that a German-Czecho-Slovak Commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.

According to these stipulations a German-Czecho-Slovak Commission

¹ This letter was communicated to the Foreign Office for purposes of record by the Prime Minister's department. Mr. Chamberlain in reply thanked Dr. von Dirksen for the trouble he had taken in getting the information in this letter.

met in Berlin and signed on November 20 a Treaty concerning questions of nationality and option.² As the Munich Agreement did not indicate which persons should have the right of option, it was one of the main tasks of the Commission to decide this question. The Commission based their decision on the principle of parity, i.e. persons of German origin living in Czecho-Slovakia should have the right of option in favour of Germany, whereas persons of non-German, i.e. mainly of Czecho-Slovak descent, living in those parts which were transferred to Germany, should have the right of option in favour of Czecho-Slovakia. Germans domiciled in the Sudeten German territories cannot, therefore, vote for Czecho-Slovakia. The position is exactly the same with Czechs domiciled in Czecho-Slovakia who cannot vote for Germany.

During the debates in the House of Commons on February 13 and 14³ members of the Opposition have mentioned their anxiety with regard to the fate of German socialists remaining in the Sudeten German territories. Apart from the fact that the German Government have been very lenient towards those persons, I think that these anxieties are unfounded for the reason alone that almost all those Germans who feared to be brought to justice for former offences had moved into Czecho-Slovakia before the German troops occupied the Sudeten-German territories; no less than 13,000 Germans for that reason emigrated into Czecho-Slovakia from the Sudeten-German territories.

Believe me, my dear Prime Minister,

Yours sincerely,
V. DIRKSEN

² See Volume III of this series, Appendix V, Document (v).

³ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, cols. 1451-74, 1661-71.

No. 141

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 20 Telegraphic [C 1894/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 24, 1939, 12.15 p.m.*

My despatch No. 85.¹

1. In view of publicity given to possibility of Colonel Beck's visit to London it would be desirable for you to discuss matter with him at an early date.

2. You should recall that Colonel Beck's original suggestion was that if meeting of Danzig Committee of Three was held in London he might be prepared to come for it. Present position is that arrangements for such a meeting are indefinite but it might be possible to fix one for early part of April.

3. It was not in my mind that Danzig questions should be sole reason for Colonel Beck's visit. I shall be glad of opportunity to discuss general situation with him as well as matters affecting Anglo-Polish relations. If Colonel Beck in fact desires to come to London I should be glad to see him any time in the

¹ No. 108.

last week of March or the first week in April irrespective of whether the Committee of Three holds a meeting at that time.

4. You should however make it clear that I attach considerable importance to the Danzig question and to its solution in agreement with the Polish Government. The Committee of Three will be obliged to hold a meeting before the next Session of the Council² and cannot in my opinion avoid making positive recommendations to the Council. In these circumstances you might be able to ascertain whether Colonel Beck would prefer to attend the meeting himself, or to send a representative to London for a meeting of the Committee held after his visit here.

5. As regards duration of visit I should suppose that two days would be sufficient.

6. For your own information I should propose to give out, if no meeting of the Committee of Three were arranged, that object of visit was a general discussion of international situation and matters affecting Anglo-Polish relations as well as of the question of Danzig. I should be glad of any indications you may have of the subjects which Colonel Beck on his side, if he concurs, is likely to raise.

² The Council of the League of Nations was next due to meet in May, 1939.

No. 142

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 25, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 31 Telegraphic [C 2344/54/18]

WARSAW, February 24, 1939, 8.40 p.m.

Offence has been caused here by expulsion of Polish students from Danzig Polytechnic by uniformed Nazi students who have also recently exasperated Polish opinion by displaying a notice at students' meeting 'Dogs and Poles not admitted'.

Today large student demonstrations occurred in Warsaw but were prevented by strong bodies of police from reaching German Embassy.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 143

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 24, 10.55 p.m.)

No. 76 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2343/281/17]

PARIS, February 24, 1939

My telegram No. 95 Saving.¹

Following is the gist of French reply received this evening.

2. French Government entirely agree to conversations on wider basis suggested and are ready for their part to establish and maintain all useful contacts between General Staffs of the two countries.

¹ No. 136.

3. French Government have charged General Gamelin to establish the first necessary contact with the competent British authorities in order to fix plan of the most urgent work to be undertaken by the two General Staffs. The French Naval Staff is in addition equipped with a special delegation to engage in conversations with the British Admiralty.

4. General Gamelin is ready to enter upon an initial examination of problems raised by the present situation as soon as British authorities think fit. He is holding himself at the disposal of the representatives of British forces, either in Paris or if His Majesty's Government consider more expedient in London.

5. French Government agree with His Majesty's Government on the strictly secret nature of the communications exchanged and if asked will reply that they are continuing the conversations initiated some time ago.²

6. I propose to leave a memorandum on lines of your telegram No. 64³ with the Minister for Foreign Affairs tomorrow February 25.

² For the full text of the French reply, see No. 152.

³ No. 133.

No. 144

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 27)

No. 15 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2418/92/55]

WARSAW, February 24, 1939

Your despatch No. 35.¹

German Ambassador today displayed great curiosity as to rumours regarding M. Beck's visit to London. He seemed to think that M. Beck had himself asked for an invitation with some specific purpose in view.

2. I told Herr von Moltke that nothing had been definitely settled regarding any such visit. When the question of withdrawal of the High Commissioner from Danzig was under discussion it had been suggested that in the event of further discussions taking place in London, M. Beck would be prepared to go there himself, especially as he had not met the leading personalities in England for some time. There was at present no question of either an official invitation or of any formal application on the part of M. Beck for such an invitation. No dates had been settled and no special importance as far as I knew need be attached to such a visit if it took place.

3. I then took the opportunity of sounding Herr von Moltke as to what had passed, or might in the near future be likely to pass, between Berlin and Warsaw regarding Danzig. Herr von Moltke categorically assured me that there was no negotiation going on at the present moment and he did not think it likely that there would be any for some months to come. I then asked what had occurred in this connexion at Berchtesgaden and during Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw. Herr von Moltke stated that it had been agreed that Danzig must eventually be thoroughly discussed, but that for the moment the status of Danzig had better remain as it was.

¹ This figure should read '85' (i.e. No. 108).

4. When I asked Herr von Moltke what the eventual German demands would be and whether the German Government would be prepared to accept some compromise, for instance, that status of the Free City should not be changed and that the Polish Government should make some concession such as giving up their representation of Danzig, he replied in great confidence that he thought that his Government would not agree to any such half measures but would insist on incorporation of Free City in (? German Reich)² a road across (? Corridor)² with extra-territorial rights. I expressed the opinion that the Poles would never agree to such proposals, whereupon Herr von Moltke stated of course there never would be any question of over-coming such concessions by force and that any change would hence be effected by peaceful negotiations.

5. I then asked him what he could tell me about any Polish suggestions and he said that he understood that Poles had proposed maintenance of the present status of the Free City with Polish-German guarantees.

6. He had gathered from M. Beck that the latter thought that the High Commissioner would be withdrawn at any rate before the League Assembly in September. Herr von Moltke . . .² thought that this would be dangerous as it would leave a vacuum. Poland and Germany would be face to face in an extremely delicate position. I said that the position of the High Commissioner seems to be becoming somewhat . . .² and that it made little difference whether he remained in Danzig or not as no use was made of him either by the Germans or the Poles and he could exert practically no influence under the present conditions. Herr von Moltke nevertheless insisted that it would be unwise to withdraw Dr. Burckhardt. I then asked him how far that represented the view of his Government. He said that this was his personal opinion but he felt that his Government had no objection to Herr Burckhardt remaining in Danzig for the present. Nor did he think that the High Commissioner would be suddenly exposed to humiliation as Herr Forster had already adopted a more conciliatory attitude which he was not likely to change in the immediate future.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 145

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 2)

No. 98 [C 2545/7/12]

PRAGUE, February 24, 1939

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum by the Air Attaché reporting a conversation with General Krejci.

PRAGUE, February 23, 1939

H.M. Chargé d'Affaires, Prague.

I called on the General Staff this morning to pay my respects to General Krejci, the Chief of the General Staff, who is retiring from the army. The General was looking well and cheerful in spite of the fact that his resignation has been forced upon him, as reported in my memorandum of the 20th February,¹ partly by the Germans and partly by certain elements in the Czech Government.

2. He said that his five years as C.G.S. had been the hardest in his life particularly, of course, the last six months of 1938. He remarked that in his view England and France had made a great mistake in not standing up against Germany in September and that they were only storing up greater trouble for themselves later on. The Germans, he said, were not ready for war in 1938 nor were they ready now.

3. In his opinion Germany had won a great victory by the use of propaganda which he thought was the most powerful weapon of modern times—far more powerful than air forces or armies.

4. Speaking of the political situation in Europe the General said that he hoped England would not make the same mistake with Russia as she had with Italy and by adopting an unfriendly attitude, throw her into the arms of Germany. Russia, he said, was a country to be reckoned with in the future. The new generation was growing up to be more efficient and mechanically minded than the last and it would be most unwise to antagonise 160 million such people.

5. There was a possibility, he said, of British policy resulting in a combination against them of Germany, Russia and Japan which would endanger almost every part of the Empire.

6. The General evidently felt very strongly about the manner in which Czecho-Slovakia had lost her Sudeten territories and kept referring back to the events of 1938 from the partial mobilization on May 21 to the last phases in September and October. Finally he remarked that he was retiring into civil life but would naturally continue to take an intense interest in the fate of his country and he hoped that Great Britain would not forget the existence of Czecho-Slovakia.

A. H. H. MACDONALD
Squadron Leader, Air Attaché

¹ Not printed. See also No. 123.

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 26, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 45 Telegraphic [C 2378/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 25, 1939, 2.0 a.m.

Your telegram No. 27.¹

I venture with all respect to express the hope that when the attitude of the Czecho-Slovak Government is discussed the sacrifices they have already made for peace as well as their present peculiarly difficult position will be borne in mind. I say this not merely from sentimental motives but because I feel we still have a certain moral influence in this country and will be better able to retain and exercise it if we show understanding of its difficulties. The apparent lack of understanding shown by some opponents of His Majesty's Government is keenly resented here and doing us no good.

2. On this question of optants it seems to me that Czech point of view is worthy of respect. They were not parties to the Munich negotiations and so have no responsibility for any of the conversations which led up to the signature of the Agreement (Mr. Strang's letter to Mr. Holman of February 21²). Their action has been confined to accepting under pressure the Agreement itself and it is no extravagant interpretation of Article 7—on the contrary one in which the Foreign Office themselves would applaud concurrence (see Central European Department's letter of October 31² to Berlin)—to say that the purpose of the *whole* article was to facilitate the transfer of populations. From this the step is a small one to the view that it meant facilitating the transfer of Czechs to Czecho-Slovakia and of Germans to Germany though the wording is admittedly capable of various interpretations (see Central European Department's letter of November 1²). At any rate so far as Czechs are concerned Munich brought nothing but sacrifices except in this one respect that they hoped it might enable them to . . .³ with their minority problems and build up a homogeneous State. Their dismay was therefore comprehensible when the German Government proposed that *any* inhabitant of ceded areas might opt for Czecho-Slovakia. It was thought that the German Government thereby intended to push every unwanted Sudeten into Czecho-Slovakia and even perhaps force large numbers of good Nazis to opt in order to increase the German minority remaining here. I was told at the time (my Saving telegram No. 553⁴) that Czecho-Slovakia then submitted a counter-draft whereby only Czechs would be able to opt for Czecho-Slovakia. While I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of that information I am not equally sure that the German Government did not change their minds spontaneously. When I raised the point at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 25 my informant said that while all those who had

¹ Not printed. This telegram informed Mr. Troutbeck of a proposed statement to be made in Parliament on the question of the optants during the debate on the loan to Czecho-Slovakia. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of L., vol. iii, cols. 1003-4.

² Not printed.

³ The text is here uncertain.

⁴ Not printed.

actually negotiated the Agreement were at the moment away, he believed that the final arrangement was in accordance with the desire of the German Government equally with that of Czecho-Slovak Government. It is indeed difficult to imagine the Germans having agreed to anything not in accordance with their own policy. In any case it is hard to grudge the Czechs this small alleviation of their . . .⁵ for apart from the economic problems that would be caused by a large influx of Sudetens, they would be an unmitigated nuisance from a political point of view—an embarrassment to the relations with Germany if they adhered to their anti-Nazi beliefs and an addition to an importunate minority if they changed them.

3. It is moreover easy to exaggerate the benefit which would have accrued to optant [? non] Nazi Sudetens if they had been given the right to opt. Clearly those now in concentration camps would have been sent there long ago before they could have exercised it and it is difficult to believe that the extension of that right to them now would lead to their release. As for the remainder who are now living in ceded territories, it is not inconceivable that they are better off where they are than they would be if they (? opted)⁵ into Czecho-Slovakia. There would be no hope of their finding work in her already over-crowded labour market where Czechs must naturally have first claim on the authorities and employers. Their only hope would lie in emigration [and] pending arrangements for it (which might well be protracted) their economic position would be to say the least precarious. It is significant that some refugees have already found their situation so intolerable that they have returned to their homes.

4. To turn to specific question in paragraph two of your telegram, I am not in a position to confirm that the final arrangement was *more* the desire of Czecho-Slovak Government than of the German Government. But provided that is made clear and that a benevolent explanation of the Czecho-Slovak attitude is added (for example that it would have been no service to the Sudetens for Czecho-Slovak Government to admit them to an over-crowded labour market) I see no great objection to your point being made.

5. So far as Sudeten Jews are concerned it is charitable and not unreasonable to think that there is a genuine misunderstanding between Germans and Czecho-Slovaks about what was meant by relevant passage of optional [*sic* ? Optants] Agreement. It is true that we have read the agreement according to German view 'Volk' but I have no reason to believe that the Czechs ever doubted the correctness of their own interpretation until it was challenged by the German Government. I am informed that Czech (? ceded)⁵ agreement supports Czech view. I fear that a statement on lines [? of] (a) of paragraph 3 of your telegram coupled with the last sentence would be extremely confusing to Czecho-Slovak Government and also cause considerable resentment for reasons given in my telegram No. 35⁶. . . .⁷ clinch matter so far as discussion between German and Czecho-Slovak Governments is concerned with the result that such Jews as have remained in ceded territories would be driven in here. I am informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the number is

⁵ The text is here uncertain.

⁶ No. 112.

⁷ The text is here uncertain.

not inconsiderable. The further result would inevitably be a heightening of anti-Jewish feeling amongst Czech population so that Jews now in this country would be (? caused)⁸ to suffer.

Repeated to Berlin.

⁸ The text is here uncertain.

No. 147

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 25, 5.15 p.m.)

No. 16 Telegraphic [C 2376/54/18]

DANZIG, February 25, 1939, 4.12 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 31.¹

Enquiry in various likely directions fails to confirm alleged expulsion of Polish students from Danzig Polytechnic by uniformed Nazi students. The offending notice is alleged by Poles here to have been displayed outside a restaurant but proprietor denies this and states that allegation is in revenge for a letter in which he requested Polish Student's Society not to frequent his restaurant in future because of their disorderly behaviour.

2. Danzigers are indignant at a resolution passed by Polish students on February 22 stating that 'the Polish nation alone has the right to control the mouth of the Vistula'. Danzig Senate has protested verbally and in writing about this resolution and its publication in responsible Polish papers. The Senate has also promised a thorough investigation of the restaurant incident.

Repeated to Warsaw and Berlin.

¹ No. 142.

No. 148

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 26, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 32 Telegraphic [C 2377/92/55]

WARSAW, February 25, 1939, 7.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 20.¹

M. Beck greatly appreciates your invitation and is ready to come to London in the last week of March or first week in April. He proposes to suggest a definite date later.

2. He would prefer not to attend meeting [of] Committee of Three himself but would send a representative.

3. As regards subjects for discussion he is anxious in view of radical changes which have occurred in Europe during the last few months to discuss the general situation with you more especially as Polish and British aims in Northern Europe seem to more or less coincide.

4. He would also like to discuss the Jewish question (see my telegram No. 16 Saving²) and will let you know later whether there are any other subjects which he would like to raise.

¹ No. 141.

² Not printed.

No. 149

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 65 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2343/281/17]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 25, 1939

Your telegram No. 76.¹

In making the communication to the French Government you should omit second and third sentences in paragraph (d) (i) of my telegram No. 64² beginning 'Our representatives propose' and ending 'giving their point of view'.

2. The present telegram confirms instructions sent to you by telephone this morning.

¹ No. 143.

² No. 133.

No. 150

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 27)

No. 17 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2437/54/18]

WARSAW, February 25, 1939

My telegram No. 31.¹

I expressed the hope to the Minister for Foreign Affairs today that student demonstrations in Danzig, Poznan and Warsaw would not lead to any serious results.

M. Beck did not attach undue importance to these incidents . . .² despite (? undeniable)² efforts by the opposition and even foreign elements to embarrass the Polish Government on the eve of Ciano's visit. When I endeavoured to secure more detailed information he was evasive. He suggested that National Democrats may have staged these demonstrations for political purposes but he would not say which foreign elements he had in mind.

¹ No. 142.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 151

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 6)

No. 43 [C 2666/54/18]

WARSAW, February 25, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that I asked the German Ambassador yesterday what he could tell me regarding the rumours which had appeared in the press about Polish-German conversations about minorities. Herr von Moltke informed me that ever since the joint Minority Declaration of November 1937 the German Government had been endeavouring to persuade the Polish authorities to agree to informal discussions by experts from their

respective Ministries of the Interior with a view to improving the conditions of minorities on both sides of the frontier. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs here, while expressing goodwill, had always at the last moment evaded definitely committing themselves. Now, however, in view of the reports which had appeared—so he understood—in the British press, they had at last realised that they must do something to meet the wishes of the Reich, and they were sending next week an official of the Ministry of the Interior and a representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Berlin to open discussions on this subject. Herr von Moltke, however, said that he had no hope that any concrete results would result from these conversations and that there was little likelihood of the Polish authorities doing anything serious to improve matters.

2. Herr von Moltke spoke most bitterly of the manner in which the German minority in this country were now being treated. He said that it was not merely in cultural matters such as schools, facilities for speaking their own language and so forth, but that it was now practically impossible for a German living here to gain his livelihood. Not only was the land belonging to the large German land-owners being practically confiscated under the agrarian reform (the usual complaints of the parcellation list¹ are made this year), but German employees of all grades in industry and agriculture were being dismissed merely because they happened to be German, and the whole situation was becoming intolerable.

3. I then suggested to Herr von Moltke that possibly Poles living in Germany were being similarly treated. Herr von Moltke stated that there was no case of a Pole being unemployed or in any way penalised merely because of his nationality. It is, however, only fair to add that complaints are made in the Polish press almost daily of expulsions, and of refusals of permission to conduct religious services or give lessons in Polish in various parts of Germany.

4. As regards the German minority in Poland, it is remarkably difficult to obtain chapter and verse for the numerous reports of incidents and arrests which are current in Warsaw or appear in the German minority press. Members of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs always minimise their importance to such a degree that I really begin to wonder if they are kept informed where members of the German minority (*i.e.* Polish nationals of German race) are concerned. I reported in my telegram No. 11, Saving² of the 15th [*sic*] February a number of arrests in the Corridor. Other similar incidents, such as the arrest of a number of school-girls, most of whom were almost immediately released, have since occurred, and it seems clear that there has been considerable tension in that part of Poland. On the 19th February Dr. Kohnert, one of the leaders of the Deutsche Vereinigung and sometimes referred to as the Polish Henlein, was to have addressed a meeting of 1,000 members of the minority in Poznan. He explained to the meeting, however,

¹ The lists of estates announced to be due for division under the agrarian reform legislation.

² No. 110. This telegram was dated February 16.

that the authorities had asked for the actual text of his speech and cut it about so badly that it no longer made sense or represented a true picture of the position of the German minority such as he wished to give.

5. Meanwhile, the German Government, undeterred by these demonstrations of, to say the least, independence on the Polish side, continue their attempts to gain goodwill here. Much has been made of Herr Himmler's visit to Bialowieza to shoot, and also of a visit by the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha with a considerable delegation of German ex-servicemen, who were received both by the President and by Marshal Smigly-Rydz, though I believe no special political importance attaches to either visit. The present feeling in Poland is, however, not propitious to approaches by Germany, as may be surmised by the preceding paragraphs. In the press, too, especially the more popular organs and the National Democrat press, complaints are multiplied of the anti-Polish behaviour of persons of German race in Poland and also in Danzig.

6. It may be that one of M. Beck's objects in going to London is to emphasise to his own countrymen and to foreign opinion that notwithstanding his own journey to Berchtesgaden and the visits of Herr von Ribbentrop and other prominent Germans to Warsaw, he is still determined to maintain Poland's neutral attitude.

7. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 152

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 27)

No. 256 [C 2383/281/17]

PARIS, February 25, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him an *aide-mémoire* dated February 24 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Anglo-French Staff conversations.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 152

PARIS, le 24 février 1939

Aide-Mémoire

Par son aide-mémoire du 3 février,¹ l'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre a bien voulu faire part au Gouvernement de la République des conclusions auxquelles l'examen de la situation générale avait conduit le Gouvernement britannique en ce qui concernait le développement des conversations entre les États-Majors britannique et français;

¹ Not printed. See No. 104, note 3.

a) Ces conversations devraient être poursuivies en envisageant l'hypothèse d'une guerre contre l'Allemagne et l'Italie agissant de concert et s'étendant de manière à inclure tous les champs d'opération possibles, particulièrement la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient. (Bien que la probabilité d'une intervention japonaise ne doive pas être écartée, on pourrait admettre que le Japon serait influencé par ses entreprises actuelles en Chine, par la crainte de la Russie et des États-Unis et qu'il adopterait vraisemblablement une attitude réservée tout au moins au début d'une situation critique dans un avenir rapproché.)

b) Elles aboutiraient à arrêter des plans communs, à la fois en ce qui concerne les opérations militaires et les questions d'approvisionnement. Des liaisons périodiques d'un caractère régulier avec l'État-Major français seraient nécessaires, afin de tenir au point les plans mentionnés au paragraphe b). Les Chefs d'États-Majors britanniques, ajoutait l'aide-mémoire, ont été invités dès maintenant à examiner l'ensemble de la question et à faire un rapport afin de mettre le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté, si le Gouvernement de la République est d'accord, à même d'entreprendre à une date rapprochée des conversations avec l'État-Major Général français sur la base élargie aujourd'hui proposée.

L'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre était chargé par le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté britannique de demander si le Gouvernement de la République serait prêt à donner des instructions analogues à ses États-Majors Généraux.

Le Gouvernement de la République a l'honneur de remercier le Gouvernement britannique de cette communication. Également désireux d'assurer à la collaboration franco-britannique toute son efficacité, il estime, comme lui, que la situation générale actuelle exige une extension des contacts entre les États-Majors français et britannique permettant d'examiner les diverses hypothèses possibles et d'inclure, dans les plans communs d'action, tous les champs d'opération éventuels. Il donne donc son entier accord au principe des conversations prévues sur la base élargie suggérée dans l'aide-mémoire britannique du 3 février. Il est pour sa part prêt à établir et à maintenir toutes liaisons utiles entre les États-Majors des deux pays.

Il a dès maintenant chargé M. le Général Gamelin de prendre avec les Autorités britanniques compétentes le premier contact nécessaire pour fixer le cadre des travaux les plus urgents à entreprendre par les deux États-Majors. L'État-Major Général de la Marine française est d'ailleurs habilité par une délégation spéciale à engager avec l'Amirauté britannique les conversations utiles concernant les questions navales.

Le Général Gamelin est prêt à aborder à une date aussi prochaine que le jugeront bon les Autorités britanniques, l'examen initial des problèmes soulevés par la situation actuelle. A cet effet il se tient à la disposition des Représentants des forces britanniques, à la date qui leur conviendra, soit à Paris, soit, si le Gouvernement britannique le jugeait plus expédient, à Londres.

Le Gouvernement français est par ailleurs d'accord avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté britannique, pour conserver un caractère strictement secret

aux communications échangées et pour répondre, s'il était interrogé, qu'il se borne à poursuivre les conversations déjà engagées depuis quelque temps.

A. L[ÉGER].

No. 153

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 27)

No. 258 [C 2384/281/17]

PARIS, February 25, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to Your Lordship's telegram No. 63¹ of the 22nd February regarding the proposed Anglo-French Staff Conversations, I have the honour to inform you that a memorandum embodying the statement of procedure contained in your telegram No. 64² of the 22nd February, as modified in accordance with Mr. Strang's telephoned message³ of this morning, was handed to the Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to-day. A copy of the memorandum is enclosed, herein.⁴

2. M. Charvériat again apologised for the delay in sending me the French reply (the substance of which was contained in my telegram No. 76⁵ of the 24th February) to my memorandum of the 3rd February.⁶ He repeated that the delay had been due to the fact that the French Government were treating this question with the utmost secrecy and that all the consultations which had taken place between the different departments had been verbal. This provided an opportunity for indicating to M. Charvériat that the strictest instructions as to secrecy had been given to the various departments concerned in London and to the members of Your Lordship's department and that it was presumed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would wish to repeat similar instructions to the French Embassy in London in order that there might be 'Gleichberechtigung' for all.

3. M. Charvériat promised to have the memorandum studied at once and to let me have a reply as soon as possible.

I have, &c.,

ERIC PHIPPS

¹ No. 129.

² No. 133.

³ See No. 149.

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ No. 143.

⁶ Not printed. See No. 104, note 3.

No. 154

*Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 26, 3.35 p.m.)*

No. 17 Telegraphic [C 2380/54/18]

DANZIG, February 26, 1939, 2.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 16¹ was based on information derived from Danzig Senate and Polish Kommissar² both of whom, whilst deploring recent inci-

¹ No. 147.

² i.e. the Polish Commissioner-General, M. Chodacki.

dents, profess to regard them as insignificant. They now however admit that Polish students were in fact ordered by Nazi students to leave lecture hall which they did. This incident was only publicly admitted in Danzig late on Saturday afternoon.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 155

*Letter from Mr. Pares (Bratislava) to Mr. Troutbeck (Prague)*¹

[C 2567/7/12]

BRITISH CONSULATE, BRATISLAVA, *February 26, 1939*

Dear Troutbeck,

Last week certain rumours reached me from fairly well informed sources which are rather disquieting and though they do not seem suitable for incorporation in an official despatch I think you would like to know about them. The financial position of the Government seems to be growing rapidly worse. The Czechs are withholding their financial support and it looks as if in a few months a disastrous situation might arise. There is said to be only sufficient money to pay government officials' salaries for one month and many claims for travelling expenses, allowances etc have not been paid for the last four months. The receipts from the proposed loan are not expected to be very large. Teplansky, the Finance Minister, who is a conservative and used to belong to the Agrarian party, is said to be prepared to resign if the Czechs continue to withhold support. One of the chief points in the Government's programme is a reduction in the size of the Civil Service, but nobody knows where a beginning will be made and there will at once be a loud outcry from the persons affected when the first reductions take effect. People are very sceptical and doubt that the Government will seriously try to carry out its proposals.

There is apparently some dangerous activity in the Hlinka guard and some of the leading members seem to be prepared to take extreme measures. The German demand for fulfilment of the promises made in October and November will come up soon for consideration in the Parliament and the demands seem to be of such a nature that pressure will have to be exerted on the Government to make them yield. It seems to me possible that if they did not give way the Germans might encourage the Germanophil extremists to undertake some kind of violent action. There is no doubt that the present Government could be easily brushed aside by the Hlinka guard which has or rather claims to have a strength of 250,000. The police, which is being recruited now with a very ill-educated type of Slovak recruit, would hardly be able to give the Government effective help in an emergency. The only elements which could put up a real resistance are the Slovak National party, dissolved in theory but in fact still a powerful political force and bitterly

¹ A copy of this letter was forwarded by Mr. Troutbeck to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 3.

opposed to the Hlinka guard; and the Czech members of the army and gendarmerie who are still in Slovakia. The latter would presumably be prevented from interfering by German diplomatic pressure in Prague. I recently met Dr. Pauliny-Toth, one of the most prominent leaders of the National party and found him a most embittered man. He told me that the party is ready to strike back at the first favourable opportunity, nevertheless I think that they could do little single-handed.

The German party has been collecting material against the members of the Government, even the Germanophil Durcansky. This takes the form of photographs showing the Ministers and/or their wives entering Jewish shops. The idea is rather absurd but in the present state of antisemitic feeling in Slovakia the publication of such photographs would damage the Government.

The Hungarian Consul in Bratislava, who certainly has many excellent though biassed sources of information at his disposal, told me recently that the Slovaks near Bratislava are in favour of annexation by Germany and that in one village 800 Slovaks have joined the German party. The eastern portion of Slovakia, he said, is anxious for incorporation in Hungary. I do not wholly believe this story but it is rather disconcerting to hear the country being divided up even in this theoretical way.

German economic influence seems beginning to grow and I have learned that two banks in Bratislava have passed into the control of Reich finance, namely the Pressburger Handelsbank and the Bratislava branch of the Bohemian Recompote Bank and Creditanstalt. The latter owns shares in many dependent undertakings in Slovakia and Germans from the Reich are being given positions in the boards of management in proportion to the number of shares held by the bank in each concern. In this way the Reichs-German colony in Bratislava is growing fast. The money for purchasing these banks came from the stocks of Czecho-Slovak currency acquired by the Reich at the time of the annexations.

Yours sincerely,

P. PARES

No. 156

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 27, 11.0 a.m.)

No. 46 Telegraphic [C 2397/19/18]

PRAGUE, February 27, 1939, 10.45 a.m.

My telegram No. 45.¹

Czecho-Slovak Government have proposed to the German Government that time limit for opting shall be extended to the end of June. Ministry of Foreign Affairs are hopeful that the German Government will agree.

Czecho-Slovak National Council has issued a manifesto to the Czech

¹ No. 146.

inhabitants of Sudeten territories warning them against opting in mass and saying that option is only an exceptional measure to be employed by individuals who have lost their means of existence.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 157

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 18 Telegraphic [C 2432/54/18]

DANZIG, February 27, 1939, 8.20 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 16¹ and 17.²

The sincere efforts of Danzig Senate and Polish Commissar to prevent an essentially trivial incident from becoming serious having failed, feelings on both sides are now running high. Danzig Senate today demands the withdrawal of resolution alleged to have been passed by Polish students.

Although neighbourhood of Polytechnic was heavily policed, serious disturbances occurred there this morning when Polish students were not only again ejected but also assaulted by Danzig students and, according to Polish Commissar, subsequently by police, who are reputed to have arrested several of them.

Despatch follows.³

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ No. 147.

² No. 154.

³ Not printed.

No. 158

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 95 Telegraphic [C 2431/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 27, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 76.¹

1. While not wishing to question the reliability of the information which the President has received from other sources, I think it only right that he should know that our reports do not in all respects confirm the more alarming details which Under-Secretary of State gave you. In order that the President may be able to see in what respects his information either conflicts with or goes beyond our reports, it will I think be best that you should give the State Department the following summary of our present information regarding the various subjects dealt with in your telegram No. 76.

2. While we are not disposed to underrate the latent danger in the present international situation, our latest information inclines us to think that Hitler has for the time being abandoned the idea of precipitating an immediate crisis, such as he seemed to be contemplating at the beginning of the year (see my telegram No. 37²).

¹ No. 122.

² No. 5.

3. Our information suggests that this is largely because the German Government have since January been impressed by the firm attitude of the French Government towards Italian claims, by the progress of British rearmament, and by the Prime Minister's statement of February 6³ on Anglo-French relations, and not least by the recent attitude of the United States Government. It may also be due in part to the temporary deterioration of the German railway system.

4. According to reliable reports, no definite signs of impending mobilisation are apparent in Germany and there would not appear to be any special troop concentrations in Austria. There has probably been an acceleration of arms deliveries to Hungary, which may have given rise to stories of the assembly of material in the East. Meanwhile however the German army is working at high pressure and the training of reservists is being expedited, but the reports of special military preparations would seem to be based upon the probability that the German army was warned to be prepared for all eventualities in the Spring, and has been making the necessary preliminary preparations. While recent secret information suggests that any plan for mobilisation early in March may have been postponed, reports have recently reached us pointing to the possibility of a military occupation of Czechoslovakia.

5. Hitler is clearly preparing for every possible eventuality. Rumours of one or other of these plans are continually reaching us and cannot be lightly discounted. On the other hand, there is no evidence at present that any one of them has been irrevocably adopted by Hitler and the date fixed for its being put into force.

6. Sir N. Henderson had conversations with Herr von Ribbentrop, Field-Marshal Göring and Baron von Weizsäcker on his return to Berlin last week⁴ and gained the impression that Hitler was at present planning no immediate adventure. But of course it was not possible for him to adduce positive facts in support of this.

7. Against this Herr Hitler's pledge to Italy in his Reichstag speech of January 30 is disquieting in view of the present state of Franco-Italian relations, particularly as Baron von Weizsäcker replied to an enquiry regarding the precise significance of Herr Hitler's words that any close analysis was superfluous since it was quite clear that Germany would support Italy in the event of war.⁵

8. As regards Italy, we believe that the average peace strength of the Italian army at this time of year, i.e. before the annual class of recruits has joined the colours, may be a little over 250,000, rising to as much as 450,000 when the recruits have joined. We believe that 60,000 reservists of the 1901 class have been called to the colours, but that many of them have been found unfit for service or unable conveniently to leave their jobs and have therefore been released; their places have however been taken by other reservists from later classes, particularly that of 1902. We have heard reports that the 1918 class may join the colours in the immediate future instead of at the beginning

³ See No. 94, note 1.

⁴ See Nos. 109, 118 and 119.

⁵ See No. 318.

of April which is the usual time. If definite evidence of this were obtained it might be a pointer, though the presence of so many untrained recruits in the army would temporarily decrease its efficiency. Apart from this a number of individuals of various classes have been called up, but we have no information as to the numbers involved nor as to the use to which they will be put. We have no information to show that anything like three hundred thousand men have been called up or that a general or even partial mobilisation is in progress.

9. The fact that 30,000 of the 60,000 men referred to above are to be sent to Libya is at first sight disquieting but it should be noted that they are rather old for active military service and have had only very scrappy training during the post-war period. It is of course possible that, despite definite statements of Italian Government, younger men will be sent to Libya instead.

10. It appears to be true that some German military experts have been in Libya, but we do not believe that there are any German military units there.

11. Recently there have been some signs of unusual naval activity in Italy.

12. Our general impression is that there has been an abnormal amount of military activity in Italy of late but that it is at least premature to deduce that Signor Mussolini has decided to resort to war in the immediate future. The present activity may be merely an insurance against unexpected developments in Spain or a prelude to an attempt to blackmail the French into meeting Italian demands; but such explanations are of course highly speculative. Certain Italian officials have recently been asserting that Signor Mussolini will make war on France if the position of the Italian colony in Tunis is not settled to his satisfaction. This may, however, merely be part of a campaign to frighten the French and ourselves into meeting Italy's demands; but the situation certainly needs careful watching. In this connexion there are reports from sources that cannot be ignored that instead of risking a major war by pressing her demands on France Italy might seek cheap glory in the annexation of Albania.

13. For reasons stated in paragraph 1 of my unnumbered telegram of February 4⁶ and Ronald's letter to Mallet⁶ of February 16, which should reach you in a day or two, we do not believe that Japan has come into line over the Anti-Comintern Pact. On the contrary, Japan's counter-proposals will only be submitted early next month for consideration by Germans and Italians. But this will of course not prevent the three Powers playing into one another's hands as and when it suits them to do so. Japanese diplomats' meeting in Paris last month, attended by Ambassadors from London, Rome and Brussels, by Minister from Berne and by Secretaries only from Berlin and Paris, did not, we think, make recommendation attributed to them by Under-Secretary, though quite possibly Ambassador from Rome, in minority of one, made recommendation in sense suggested.

⁶ Not printed.

No. 159

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 2)

No. 105 [C 2551/72/55]

PRAGUE, February 27, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 39 Saving¹ of February 16, I have the honour to inform you that a communiqué issued by the Czecho-Slovak Press Bureau and published in the press of the 26th February states that a further improvement has occurred in the situation in the Czecho-Slovak-Polish frontier area.

2. The communiqué says that clashes and incidents on the frontier have ceased. Since the visit of General Hrabcik to the Silesian Voivode, Dr. Grazinski, at Katowice, no further expulsions of Czechs from the Teschen area have taken place. The further refugees who had arrived at Ostrau, Frydek and Mistek were Czechs who had left the occupied area voluntarily. Since the middle of February there had been no case of a Czech in the Teschen area being ill-treated or having his life or property threatened. It is added that the number of refugees from Poland amounts to 34,000.

3. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Warsaw and Berlin.

I have, &c.,

J. M. TROUTBECK

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported the visit of General Hrabcik referred to in paragraph 2 above.

No. 160

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 12.15 p.m.)*

No. 72 Telegraphic [C 2436/13/18]

BERLIN, February 28, 1939, 11.35 a.m.

In view of German mobilization rumours such as those contained in Mr. Kirkpatrick's letter of February 16¹ I have consulted Military Attaché on the present position and his views in which I concur are as follows:

'The German army is passing through a phase of its evolution in which very much that would normally be abnormal is in point of fact normal. There are many circumstances which must appear to indicate mobilization measures to unskilled observers without technical knowledge or background. These give rise to many rumours which need not necessarily be deliberately malicious.'

The great difficulty—even to skilled observers—is to decide when 'normal abnormality' merges into something more significant. Up to date I have no *reliable* information whatever to indicate that mobilization in any form has commenced but I cannot say more than that.'

¹ Not printed.

No. 161

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 9.0 p.m.)

No. 36 Telegraphic [C 2453/54/18]

WARSAW, February 28, 8.27 p.m.

Danzig telegram [No.] 18¹ and my telegram [No.] 17 Saving.²

Whatever may have been the justification for Danzig incidents widespread student disturbances in Polish towns during the past few days seem to have been fomented by Nationalists and Left wing elements hostile to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and anxious to embarrass the Government on the occasion of Count Ciano's visit. (Demonstrations were however not anti-Italian, cheers for Italy even being given in some cases.) As regards foreign instigators (see my telegram under reference) the only clue to M. Beck's meaning is statement made to me by his Chef de Cabinet that the handwriting of the 'dogs and Poles' notice betrayed Ukrainian origin.

Some effervescence continues but the position of the Government or of M. Beck (who has now joined the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs on shooting trip) does not seem in any way threatened though M. Beck has undoubtedly been vexed and embarrassed by demonstrations which reveal widespread anti-German feeling in Poland. Official communiqué last night announced that the Government had demanded the suspension of lectures at the Danzig Polytechnic and professed determination to protect Polish interests in Danzig.

German Ambassador is naturally annoyed at demonstrations here and complains of inadequate police protection. Though not exaggerating the importance of the incident (? he)³ expressed the view to me that an affair over Danzig was always dangerous. The communiqué of 'Deutsche Diplomatische Politische Korrespondenz' published here this morning is reassuring but it would be interesting to learn the real attitude of the German Government.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 157.

² No. 150.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 162

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 2)

No. 258 [C 2533/15/18]

BERLIN, February 28, 1939

My Lord,

During the months of December and January, when I was on leave of absence, the various despatches and telegrams addressed to the Foreign Office by this Embassy will have made abundantly clear to Your Lordship the state of feeling and the atmosphere prevailing in this country in regard to

future events. In the course of those months the rumours of mobilisation and projected German aggression and expansion towards the various points of the compass appear to have vitiated the whole political horizon. But, in view of the existence of such rumours, it was the duty of His Majesty's Embassy to report their tenor as objectively as possible and to draw such inference as they could. His Majesty's Embassy were never at any time in a position to confirm the rumours of secret mobilisation, nor were they at the same time able authoritatively to deny that some such scheme might be afoot. It was difficult to ascertain the source of this spate of rumours and alarms or to maintain that they contained no basis of truth. On the one hand, it was justifiable to assume that during that period the German authorities were actually studying and working out in the closest detail plans and schemes of all kinds in order to meet any eventuality or opportunity and to be ready for action, if necessary, at the shortest notice. On the other hand, these activities were no doubt seized upon with alacrity by all those elements, whether German or foreign, who were opposed to the present régime here and were used in an exaggerated form more often than not for purely selfish or malicious purposes, for strengthening and instigating hostility towards Germany with the idea of securing the eventual overthrow of National Socialism. In fact, preparation and execution of plans almost became synonymous terms. As was only to be expected, the irresponsible organs of the press and the reports of intelligence agents and ill-informed travellers helped to aggravate the position and added fuel to the flames.

2. Herr Hitler's comparatively moderate speech on the 30th January came, therefore, somewhat as a shock to all those who had worked themselves up into a potential state of hysteria as to German aggressive intentions. The terms of that speech were, generally speaking, more reassuring than had been expected and the reference to the hope of a long peace produced an immediately calming effect. It is not easy to express any definite view as to [to] what this apparent modification in policy may be ascribed. It seems, however, fairly clear that the speech was at the last moment considerably modified and, that being the case, it is to be supposed that it may only have been on Herr Hitler's arrival in Berlin after a prolonged sojourn in Berchtesgaden that he realised for himself for the first time the economic situation and real state of feeling in the country. Recent reports from this Embassy on the breakdown in the communications system, general labour difficulties, food shortage, the general unpopularity of restrictive measures and the impossibility of any further large increase in the rearmament programme, owing to export and import considerations, recorded the facts which may have opened Herr Hitler's eyes to the true position and have accounted for his more conciliatory statement of German policy. In fact, economic needs may have for the first time outshadowed political aspirations. This was the situation which I found on my return to Berlin.

3. During the last few weeks a period of calm has ensued, and even the press representatives are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain sufficient news for home consumption. From consular reports there is little to be

gleaned about troop movements or measures for mobilisation, and all rumours about adventures in the Ukraine, attacks on Holland, &c., seem to have largely died down. Although it is suggested in some quarters that this calm may only be a prelude to another storm, I am not inclined to take that pessimistic view at present. Both from the economic and political points of view, the moment is more one for stocktaking than planning new adventures. It is no doubt hoped that the forthcoming discussions with British industry may help to relieve a serious economic situation, and it may therefore be felt to be wiser in the interests of Germany not to spoil the atmosphere in advance by any untoward incidents. What happens afterwards may depend on the exact degree of satisfaction which may be given to Germany in this sphere. To my mind this should be just sufficient to encourage Germany to hope for more, provided of her own volition she reduces her present re-armament programme. While we must insist on securing appropriate advantages to ourselves in return for benefits conferred, it must always be realised, firstly, that Germany has little to offer to us except such a reduction, and, secondly, that the fields of additional economic expansion towards the east and the Balkans may now appear to Germany just as accessible by peaceful penetration as by force of arms.

4. On the political side the intentions of Germany appear to be governed principally by the state of Franco-Italian relations and, until this situation clears itself, it seems that Germany, even if she were so disposed, would find it difficult to embark on a serious venture elsewhere. From sources of information here it would seem probable that Italy's claims will in the long run be comparatively reasonable and that Germany, in her own interests, will be more likely to act as a brake than otherwise on any exaggerated Italian aspirations. If this diagnosis of the position is an accurate one, I anticipate, provided no new untoward incidents occur in Italo-French relations, and subject to any reactions on the part of Herr Hitler to foreign press attacks or insinuations, in the immediate future a period of relative calm.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 163

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 2, 2.15 p.m.)

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 2560/16/18]

BERLIN, March 2, 1939, 1.58 p.m.

Chancellor entertained Diplomatic Corps to dinner last night. As he spoke to every member of it afterwards in turn there was no opportunity for anything but brief generalities. After agreeing on necessity for gradual improvement of atmosphere, Herr Hitler observed with considerable feeling that the only question which still separated the two countries was the colonial one, that he admired the British Empire and had no desire to work against its

interests, but that the latter in return must recognise the special position of Germany on the continent. I asked him how long he would be staying in Berlin and he told me till about March 10. I said that while I was away I had had several talks with you and the Prime Minister and that you were still thinking on lines of Munich and that if it interested him I was entirely at his disposal any time and could give him my general views on the situation in England. Herr Hitler bowed but without comment and did not give me the impression that he welcomed the idea.

No. 164

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 72 Telegraphic [C 2600/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 2, 1939, 4.10 p.m.*

Geneva telegram No. 6.¹

1. Secretary-General of League has circulated to members of Committee of Three on Danzig statement of High Commissioner that he has completed his period of leave and feels it is his duty to return to his post. It was agreed in January that before the High Commissioner's return members of Committee of Three should be consulted.

2. As *Rapporteur* to the Committee of Three I consider High Commissioner's return desirable for following reasons:

(a) The Committee of Three at its next meeting will require for proper consideration of the position a report of High Commissioner on situation and on conditions in which he can carry out his functions. His return to Danzig for a period seems essential in order that he may prepare a report.

(b) Jewish question in Danzig has not yet taken unfavourable turn anticipated in January but continues to cause concern. Personal influence of High Commissioner may be effective in restraining undesirable developments.

(c) It was at one time thought that Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw might result in some arrangement regarding Danzig adversely affecting position of League. This did not happen and no such arrangement appears probable in the near future.

(d) New situation has arisen owing to recent incidents in Danzig affecting relations with Poland. High Commissioner's principal function is to deal in first instance with difficulties arising between Danzig and Poland. It seems inadvisable that Committee of Three should take responsibility of preventing his discharging this task.

(e) In all the circumstances refusal of Committee of Three to agree to High Commissioner's return might have undesirable political consequences of precipitating Danzig question prematurely. I think that it is advisable to avoid causing any change in the situation until Committee of Three has fully discussed position in light of High Commissioner's report.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 551.

3. Please inform French Government that I hope on foregoing grounds they will agree that High Commissioner should now resume his post. His return would of course be without prejudice to recommendations Committee will make to Council. The matter is urgent as the High Commissioner is awaiting decision in Geneva and events in Danzig clearly make his early presence there advisable.

4. You should add that I contemplate calling meeting Committee of Three during last fortnight of April but that I propose to take advantage of Colonel Beck's forthcoming visit to London² for preliminary discussion of Danzig question with him.

5. A similar communication is being made to Swedish Minister in London. Repeated to Stockholm, Warsaw, Berlin and Danzig.

² A further telegram was sent to Sir E. Phipps at 4.30 p.m. on March 2 substituting the phrase 'I hope to take advantage of Colonel Beck's proposed visit which is not definitely fixed' for 'I propose to take advantage of Colonel Beck's forthcoming visit to London'.

No. 165

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax

(Received March 2, 7.45 p.m.)

No. 84 Telegraphic [C 2598/1237/18]

PARIS, March 2, 1939, 5.35 p.m.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs read me out extracts from telegram received this morning from the French Ambassador in Berlin.

M. Coulondre believes that the moment is favourable for improving Franco-German relations and that the German Government are well disposed. (M. Bonnet tells me that Franco-German economic negotiations will shortly begin, see my telegram No. 107 Saving¹ of February 28.)

The French Ambassador had an interview yesterday with Herr von Weizsäcker however, who spoke to him most seriously about the anger felt by Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop at the continued rumours in the French and British press regarding the likelihood of early German attack on Holland or Switzerland.

State Secretary described these press rumours as poisonous and dangerous lies and urged most insistently that they should cease.

M. Coulondre also urged the French Government in the same sense. He added that a dangerous situation might well develop later on if, once it was apparent that no such attacks were being made, the French and British press began to crow and to make out that they had merely been abandoned because of heavy rearmament in France and Great Britain. M. Coulondre said that his British colleague entirely agreed with this view, i.e. the desirability of preventing such a situation from arising.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported that the French Government had decided to approach the German Government suggesting an exchange of French agricultural products for German machinery, and a possible exchange of French colonial products for German exports. Negotiations were expected to begin in Berlin or Paris in about a week's time. See also Appendix II, section 1, last three paragraphs.

Finally M. Coulondre reported that the German Government had been greatly touched and pleased at the friendly references to Germany made by M. Bonnet in his speech at Gourdon a few days ago (see my telegram No. 105 Saving).² Such friendly references were always noted by the Nazis and produced an excellent effect on them.

Repeated to Berlin.

² Not printed. In this speech of February 26, M. Bonnet referred to the Franco-German declaration of December 6, 1938, and said that he hoped the agreement would prove to be the first step towards the establishment of the confident relations which France desired to maintain and develop with Germany.

No. 166

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 2, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 78 Telegraphic [C 2596/54/18]

BERLIN, March 2, 1939, 7.45 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 36,¹ last sentence.

Up to the present the 'Deutsche Diplomatische Politische Korrespondenz' report summarised in my telegram No. 73² constitutes the only comment on the student demonstrations in Poland and Danzig. The D.D.P.K. message has not even been published in the Press whilst the latter has been completely silent over the whole question. The German Government are apparently trying to minimise the significance of the demonstrations and displaying readiness, at least for the time being, to maintain friendly relations with Poland. Colonel Beck's conversations with Herr Hitler in January and Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw recently seem to point to the fact that Germany is endeavouring by being conciliatory on outstanding questions such as Danzig, the Corridor, etc., to secure a friendly Poland on her eastern frontier in view of German internal economic situation and the possibilities of international emergencies elsewhere. If these German efforts at establishing friendship with Poland at the present moment were to founder, German policy might be regarded as having failed in its object and for this reason therefore the D.D.P.K. may have taken the line which it has.

On the other hand a member of my staff was told last night by a representative of the official Polish News Agency, that the Polish Ambassador had had a disagreeable interview with Herr von Ribbentrop in connexion with the demonstrations and that German-Polish relations were therefore for the moment far from being cordial. The Agency representative himself was nervous of the developments at Danzig. That is certainly the danger, but unless and until the agitation is started in the Press here, I am not inclined to believe that the German Government are seeking for trouble.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 161.

² Not printed.

No. 167

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 3, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 80 Telegraphic [C 2609/17/18]

BERLIN, March 3, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

My despatch No. 174.¹

Reply has now been received from German Minister for Foreign Affairs to the effect that the German Government fear declaration by Western Powers of guarantee in favour of Czecho-Slovakia might have effect of accentuating differences between that country and surrounding States rather than of constituting a factor of appeasement in that area. German Government consider it necessary therefore to await firstly a clarification of internal development of Czecho-Slovakia and improvement of that country's relations with surrounding States before they can make any further definition of their (? attitude).²

Reply in similar terms has been received by French Embassy.

Text and translation of note go to you by air mail.³

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 91.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ See No. 171.

No. 168

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 3, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 87 Telegraphic [C 2625/92/55]

PARIS, March 3, 1939, 6.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 72.¹

Aide-mémoire in the sense of your instructions was handed to Political Director this morning. Political Director said that Ministry of Foreign Affairs were about to ask His Majesty's Government to ascertain views of Swedish Government² on necessities of Danzig situation.

While emphasizing that there is no difference of aim between French Government and His Majesty's Government Political Director feels that question of method is a matter of appreciation for which knowledge of Swedish reaction to proposal for High Commissioner's return is required. He would prefer to have information on this point before taking up position since it seems desirable to prevent a Swedish withdrawal from the Committee and the Swedes at Geneva were opposed to return of the High Commissioner. He considers it most desirable that Sweden should remain on Committee in order that matter may continue to have an international aspect and not become mainly Franco-British. Once Ministry know Swedish reaction they would like discussion with His Majesty's Government in the light of it. Political Director does not anticipate that French Government will see any

¹ No. 164.

² The Swedish Foreign Minister was a member of the Committee of Three.

serious disadvantage in M. Burckhardt's return if Swedes agree though he does not at the moment feel convinced that this would be the best method of dealing with the Danzig situation.

Repeated to Stockholm, Berlin, Warsaw and Danzig.

No. 169

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 4, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 155 Telegraphic [C 2672/15/18]

ROME, March 3, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

Military Attaché lunched today with his German colleague who has just returned from Berlin where there has been a conference of German Military Attachés abroad. The latter said that everyone at conference was much impressed by the statement made by German Military Attaché in London on British rearmaments.

He added that he had been received by Herr von Ribbentrop who had told him that he was confident that there would not be a war for a long time and when he had pointed out the danger of a Franco-Italian explosion Minister for Foreign Affairs had remarked that the dangerous time was over and as soon as an armistice was arranged in Spain, Germany would re-open negotiations with the French and keep Italians quiet.

No. 170

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 509 [C 2608/281/17]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 3, 1939

Sir,

In the course of conversation with Sir A. Cadogan on March 2, the French Ambassador referred to Staff conversations. He said that it was the opinion of his Government that these should proceed as soon as possible and should be conducted at a high level, though he added the personal view that it would be as well to avoid attracting too much public attention.

2. Sir A. Cadogan said that he knew that the French Government were of this opinion, and he believed that there had even been a hint that General Gamelin might be prepared to come over to London for the purpose. Sir A. Cadogan thought, however, that His Majesty's Government would discourage that idea if they had not already done so, and he explained that their present intention was to complete as rapidly as possible a general survey of the problem to be discussed, which would be sent to Paris for communication to the French military authorities, in the hope that they might reciprocate with a survey of their own. It seemed to His Majesty's Government that if

this could be done as a preliminary to actual meetings, the Staff officers taking part would be familiar with the general lay-out of the problems and might be expected to be furnished with instructions enabling them to deal with most of the questions that would arise. This would help to avoid some of the delays that might be expected to arise from the necessity of having to refer back to the highest authorities for instructions.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 171

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 6)

No. 269 [C 2657/17/18]

BERLIN, March 3, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a note dated February 28 from the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs giving their views with regard to a guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 171

(*Translation.*)

MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BERLIN, *February 28, 1939*

Note Verbale

According to His Britannic Majesty's Embassy's Note of the 8th February, 1939, No. 54¹ His Britannic Majesty's Government is of the opinion that the time has now come for a settlement of the question of a guarantee in favour of the Czecho-Slovak State, which was dealt with in the Annex to the Munich Agreement of the 29th September, 1938. In drawing attention to the declarations made by the head of the Italian Government and the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in January of this year to the British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the British Government has expressed the wish to be informed of the attitude of the German Government in this matter. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour in reply to this enquiry to inform the British Embassy as follows:

Already in the conversations which took place in connexion with the Munich Conference the German Government made it clear in the most definite manner, in response to the enquiries which it received, that it could only consider making a declaration in the sense of a guarantee of the Czecho-Slovak State if at least all the other neighbouring States of Czecho-Slovakia were prepared to assume a similar obligation. For however small the possible differences between a guaranteed Czecho-Slovakia and the German Reich might be in the future, the differences between that country and its other neighbours might be no less great. In this connexion the

¹ Enclosure in No. 91.

assumption by England and France of such a guarantee obligation in favour of Czecho-Slovakia appears, in the opinion of the German Government, to offer no reliable safeguard against the development or intensification of such differences and the conflicts which may possibly spring from them. Indeed, in the light of past experiences the Government of the German Reich fears that the declaration by the Western Powers of a guarantee in favour of Czecho-Slovakia might rather have the effect of accentuating the differences between that country and the surrounding States. The British Government will not be unaware that differences of opinion exist, for example, between Hungary and Poland, on the one hand, and Czecho-Slovakia on the other, with regard to the correctness of the frontier as it has now been defined. The Government of the Reich and the Italian Government have accepted this frontier in the hope that they might be able, as a result of their, as they thought, not unsuccessful efforts in this question, to strike a compromise, which might receive the approval of all parties. The facts have since shewn that in this territory, in which national divisions are so strong and deeply rooted and which cannot for that reason in any sense be made the subject of a comparison with Western conditions, a settlement satisfactory to all sides is at the best of times only to be achieved with the utmost difficulty. How problematical and uncertain even the best intentioned of such endeavours can be, the British Government may perhaps best be able to judge from the proposals which that Government itself has made for a solution of the Palestine question. The main cause of the critical development of the present problem appears, however, undoubtedly to be the fact that in past years the various Czech Governments believed, on account of the guarantees, whether seriously meant or otherwise, which they had received from the Western Powers, that they could simply disregard the inescapable demands of the national minorities. Thence came those internal oppositions and conflicts, which finally led, of necessity, to the solution of the year 1938.

Since it cannot be denied that within Czecho-Slovakia the forces which were responsible for these earlier developments are still active, even though this may be against the wishes of the present Government, there still undeniably exists even now the danger that guarantees prematurely given would not only not lead to any reasonable solution of Czecho-Slovakia's internal difficulties, but might rather contribute to an intensification of existing differences and thereby to bringing about new conflicts. In the hope of being able to allay the unrest in this territory, which necessarily was of the utmost interest to themselves, the German Government, in co-operation with the Italian Government, acting in the capacity of arbitrators, recently gave the decisions which, as it has since been able to ascertain, received but scant approval from the parties concerned. It is not therefore prepared by further premature intervention unnecessarily to provide material for further criticism of its policy in countries with which it wishes to live in peace and friendship. At the same time, as has already been observed, the German Government sees in an extension of this

guarantee obligation to the Western Powers not only no factor for the appeasement of internal conflicts in the territories in question, but rather a further element likely to strengthen wild tendencies, as has been the case in the past. The German Government is at the same time fully aware, that fundamentally the general line of development in this European area falls primarily within the sphere of the most important interests of the German Reich, not only from the historical point of view, but in the light of geographical and above all economic necessity.

The German Government therefore considers it to be necessary first to await a clarification of the internal development of Czecho-Slovakia and the improvement of that country's relations with the surrounding States which may result therefrom, before the time for any further statement of its attitude can be said to have arrived.

No. 172

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 275 [C 2828/8/18]

BERLIN, March 3, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy setting out his views on the possible effects from the purely military point of view of any concessions made by Great Britain to Germany at present in the economic field.

2. The arguments adduced by Colonel MacFarlane in support of his thesis are valuable and merit serious examination. The issues involved, however, raise important questions of policy which outweigh purely military considerations. The questions to be answered seem to be—

(a) Whether on the economic side His Majesty's Government should refuse to go further in the direction of co-operation with Germany, so long as she pursues her present course of senseless rearmament, on the ground that any assistance would simply be employed for strengthening still further her military position; or

(b) Whether economic co-operation should be pursued in the hope that the political atmosphere may be improved thereby and Germany may be finally induced to refrain from any political adventures which she might contemplate, and perhaps even desist up to a certain point from the present armaments race.

3. I do not feel myself in a position to render judgment on such a highly complex problem, with all the important issues which it involves. It is more than possible that in the present circumstances any economic concession made to Germany will be mainly used for the benefit of armaments. On the other hand, if no readiness for economic co-operation and understanding is shown by the United Kingdom, Germany is still more likely to endeavour to carry on with her present military policy, and, notwithstanding that the

seriousness of the internal economic situation may slow down her efforts, she is certain to make considerable progress therewith. A policy of standing aloof on our part would no doubt be regarded by Germany as a threat to her interests and as a measure of economic encirclement, and would, as such, be employed by the German Government at home as the very best form of propaganda in support of foreign adventure and increased armaments.

4. In these circumstances it appears to me that some middle course is the best temporary solution, whereby we could co-operate on a scale which in itself would not be so appreciable as materially to affect German rearmament, but which might be just enough in itself to give the German mind the impression that voluntary renunciation of excessive rearmament might lead to a larger measure of co-operation and goodwill from Great Britain. On the same grounds I consider that it would be bad policy to discourage co-operation between German and British industry provided that it is arranged on a strictly business basis, calculated to bring just as much or even more benefit to Great Britain in the economic field as to Germany.

5. In determining what price can be exacted for our co-operation and the moment at which the most favourable bargain can be struck, it is essential to appreciate, better than I am at the moment in a position to do, the real extent not only of Germany's economic difficulties, but also of her immediate aims. It must be borne in mind that Hitler himself has said, 'Export or die'. Can Germany continue her present armament race and *at the same time* increase her exports? It is at least doubtful if she can. In my opinion, if her aims are legitimate and if she were really convinced, and believe me she is not, that the Western Powers, backed by the United States of America, have no intention of making war on her, she would have no reason for hesitating in her own vital interests quickly to divert a proportion of her raw materials from armaments to exports.

6. Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to guarantee immunity for Germany, without knowing what her ulterior aims are. And can these be definitely established? There is the legitimate aim of trade development and in all fairness we must admit that 80 million industrious Germans have certain rights in this respect. But there is also the illegitimate aim of political domination and it is the German habit to confuse the two.

7. That is the dilemma as I see it to-day.

I have, &c.,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 172

Memorandum by Colonel Mason-MacFarlane respecting the Military Point of View as regards Concessions to Germany in the Economic Field.

BERLIN, February 27, 1939

The economic and political aspects of the trade discussions which are to take place shortly in Berlin are outside my province. I wish to place on record only the military considerations as I see them.

From the purely military point of view anything that assists Germany to maintain or increase her export trade must appear undesirable. The bulk of Germany's export trade is devoted to obtaining raw materials or essential foodstuffs from abroad. Of the raw materials so obtained a large proportion are devoted to the armament industry and to unproductive undertakings. Only sufficient raw materials are made available for the export industry to enable further supplies to be imported either by purchase or by barter. Incidentally the German armament industry plays a considerable part in Germany's export trade.

At the present moment Germany's economic and financial position is critical. Herr Hitler has admitted as much himself. Exports must be increased or at any rate maintained at a satisfactory level if Germany is to be able to continue her economic and financial progress *according to Herr Hitler's rules*. If Germany is given facilities for maintaining her export trade on a sufficient scale, there seems to be but little prospect that we shall see any reduction in the *tempo* of armament. If she is not given such facilities there is every possibility that a reduction of the speed with which she is rearming and of the scope of her armaments will be forced upon her. There have been some indications latterly that the present economic situation may already be commencing to produce such an effect.

It is clear that, largely as a result of the financial and political repercussions of 1938, the German economic position has deteriorated to a point where something drastic must be done to re-establish it. If the remedy takes the shape of assistance sufficient to give the 'non-cooperating' Nazi economic system a new lease of life, we must inevitably risk being faced with a continuance of a programme which is devoted mainly to armament. There is, however, a remedy which Herr Hitler can apply himself, and until he has demonstrated practically that this remedy is inefficacious it seems unsound from the military point of view to answer his calls for help. Logically the solution of his economic problem lies in his own hands. Germany must give up playing at economics under 'Hitler rules'; she must reduce her armament programme; and devote a corresponding increase of effort and materials to her productive export trades.

It may be argued that sooner than do this Herr Hitler will fight. He has said that he will fight to avoid economic defeat, but there is much that he must obviously do before being able to convince the German people that his present economic situation is the fault of others and not largely his own. He must put up a show of making a genuine economic effort and of reducing unproductive expenditure before his people will believe that they are indeed being strangled by foreign action. There is naturally a possibility—and it is greater this year than it will be for some years to come—that Herr Hitler might be tempted to risk a major war sooner than see his economic ideology shattered. The internal situation in Germany is, however, already such that it might equally act as a strong deterrent against embarking on war. He can have no delusions on the subject of starting a major war with an unsound Home Front. The risk is, at any rate, small enough to be well worth running,

and it will, or should be, reduced by the visit of His Britannic Majesty's Ministers and of the representatives of the Federation of British Industries.

The visit in itself is a gesture which will make it harder for Herr Hitler to convince his public that it is entirely England's fault that Germany's export trade is losing ground. But from the purely military point of view we should go as little as possible beyond this gesture. By showing a firm front we may well be able to force Germany to set her house in order. We have the right to expect that a still virile Germany should apply the available first aid to her self-inflicted wound. The most that we should do in the meantime would be to make minor concessions sufficient to avoid matters being brought to a head by Herr Hitler *during this summer and autumn*.

It may be thought that, in return for trade facilities, Germany might be prepared to agree to some form of armament limitation. This is a type of bargain which may well be of doubtful value, as the present régime in Germany can hardly be relied upon not to go back on an agreement at any time if it appears to them that by doing so they are serving the best interests of the German people.

We can only reduce the speed and scope of the universal armaments race by forcing a reduction of *tempo* on Germany. Germany is apparently now in dire economic straits. We have not applied the economic screw—Germany has tightened it down herself—and it is surely unsound for us to ease it before Germany has made an effort to do so herself.

From the military point of view concessions made by us to the present régime in Germany are generally to be deplored. The opposition in Germany and our potential allies in a possible war—above all, America—are becoming more and more convinced of our weakness and lack of will or power to stand up to Germany. The American Chargé d'Affaires spoke to me at great length on the subject of our trade mission the other night, and appears to be convinced already that its main motive is political, and not economic. Germany has dug her own economic grave. We must do all we can to make this clear to the world and, in particular, to Germany. She can crawl out herself if Herr Hitler is prepared to reduce his armament ambitions and incidentally revise many of his ideas on economics. This much must be clear to Herr Hitler, and is more than clear to German industry and the public generally. If we help her out—as regards economics gratuitously—her armament programme will in all probability continue at its present rate, and the rate is such that we can hardly hope to make up leeway without having to adapt our own economic system to National Socialist methods or, alternatively, bankrupt ourselves.

I discussed this question generally on the evening of the 25th with the head of the Operations Section of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. He stated categorically that, contrary to foreign opinion, the return of Germany's former colonies would very materially improve Germany's situation. He also said that Germany had a *right* to a privileged position *vis-à-vis* all other countries as regards trade in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and that she intended to get this right acknowledged. I pointed out that the general

public in England could never be convinced of such a right as long as Germany continued to follow her present economic principles; that trade was a matter of competition; and that Germany had deliberately handicapped herself in many respects. Oberst Warlimont refused to acknowledge any of these arguments, and repeated that Germany claimed recognition of her economic suzerainty over Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

There are naturally weighty financial, political and (although hardly applicable to dealings with Nazi Germany) ethical arguments in favour of lending Germany a hand in her trade difficulties. From a military point of view, which it has been my *sole* object to put forward, there are practically none. I have shown this memorandum to the Naval and Air Attachés, and they are in agreement with the views expressed therein.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE,
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 173

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 6)

No. 45 [C 2661/1321/55]

WARSAW, March 3, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 38¹ of the 2nd March, I have the honour to report that the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived in Warsaw on an official visit on the 24th February, accompanied by Countess Ciano, various senior members of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and a party of journalists. He left Poland on the 1st March after a day's shooting at Białowieża and a visit to Cracow.

2. It was natural to expect that the atmosphere of this visit would be friendly, since Italy and Poland are united by past cultural ties and a certain similarity of historical development, as well as by their common role of ostensibly friendly neighbours of Germany. Signor Mussolini's flattering allusions to Poland in his declaration reproduced in the Polish press on the 25th February² and his apparent abandonment of the idea of a four-Power pact have contributed to Italy's present popularity here. The visit was, in fact, outwardly marked by extreme cordiality on both sides, though the serenity of the political atmosphere was marred by the simultaneous outbreak in towns throughout Poland of anti-German riots on the occasion of student troubles at Danzig. As I have reported elsewhere (see my telegram No. 36³ of the 28th ultimo), there seems little doubt that these disturbances were fomented by Nationalist and left wing Opposition elements wishing to embarrass the Government, and particularly the Minister for Foreign Affairs,

¹ Not printed.

² The 'Gazeta Polska' of February 25 printed a letter from Signor Mussolini commending the political and military régime in Poland, which, he said, assured her a place among the Great Powers.

³ No. 161.

on the occasion of Count Ciano's visit. It is noteworthy, however, that the demonstrations were in no case anti-Italian, and that the students in some cases even raised cheers for Italy.

3. But, while it is easy to understand the general coincidence of Polish and Italian interests, it is harder to discover what practical political results emerged from Count Ciano's visit, and, as I have not yet been able to see M. Beck, I propose in this despatch to enumerate the subjects which one would have expected to have been discussed. In general, the advantages which Poland might expect from collaboration with Italy fall into two categories: those to be gained from a weakening of Italy's ties with her partner in the Rome-Berlin Axis, and those which would involve a greater or less co-ordination of Polish policy with that of the Axis Powers. As regards the former type of advantage, stress has been laid in official communiques during the visit on the common interest of both Powers in preserving 'equilibrium in the Danube basin', a somewhat trite phrase, which presumably is intended to cover any arrangements which tend to keep that area free from either German or Russian domination. It is, at any rate, probable that the two Ministers for Foreign Affairs were in agreement on the desirability of promoting a Roumanian-Hungarian *rapprochement*—a task for which the approaching visit here of the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs may provide a favourable occasion. On the other hand, I learn from journalistic sources that Poland met once again with the rejection of her plan for a common Polish-Hungarian frontier, to be obtained by Hungary's absorbing Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia; and this theory seems confirmed not only by Signor Mussolini's declaration to the Prime Minister and Your Lordship (as reported in section (3) of Foreign Office memorandum R 434/1/22⁴ of the 14th January last) that Italy was disinterested in this scheme, but also by a statement made by Signor Gayda in yesterday's Polish press, in which he recalls the settlement of Hungary's present frontier at the Vienna Conference by the German and Italian Governments, and significantly adds that the question of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia had better be shelved for the time being.

4. There is one general problem on which Polish and Italian interests do not coincide, namely, the direction which German expansion, if it must come eastwards, should take. Italy would presumably prefer to see Germany involved in a north-easterly direction, whereas Poland would, on the whole, feel happier if such expansion took a more southerly route.

5. As regards possible points of *rapprochement* between Poland and the Rome-Berlin Axis, it appears unlikely that Count Ciano's visit has led to any concrete results. As I have already mentioned, a section of Polish public opinion has not failed during the visit to express vociferously its partiality for one partner in the Axis and its inveterate detestation of the other. My German colleague, it may be observed, has made little secret of his suspicion and dislike of the visit. I may also mention here that Italy has recently appointed as consul in Lwów a man who, though strongly Fascist, is known

⁴ See Volume III of this Series, No. 500.

to be anti-German and to regard his task there as involving a close watch on German activities in the Ukraine. Perhaps the most important symptom of Poland's independence of the policy of the Axis is the caution with which Italian colonial claims on France appear to be regarded here. A suggestion of this appeared in the speech of welcome addressed by M. Beck to Count Ciano on the 24th February, in which the former expressed his desire for 'friendly collaboration in defence of the interests of our two States', but was careful to add 'with understanding for the just interests of others'. The available evidence, moreover, even suggests that M. Beck went out of his way during the visit to express anxiety for the composition of Italo-French differences. In the same way, it is persistently rumoured here that Count Ciano failed in an attempt to secure some guarantee of Poland's alignment with the Axis Powers as regards her Jewish policy.

6. A topic on which it appears possible that Italian representations during the visit found a receptive hearing in Government circles here is that of colonies. The problem of overseas settlement and raw materials looms large at present in the public consciousness of this country, and a propaganda campaign on the subject is in process of being launched by the Camp of National Unity. Any remarks that Count Ciano or his suite may have let fall on this subject will doubtless have fallen on fertile ground, in spite of Poland's reluctance, already mentioned, to connive at the acquisition of colonial benefits by the despoiling or weakening of France. The furtherance of a colonial campaign at this moment would have the additional advantage for Poland of distracting Germany's attention from her eastern frontiers for the time being. At the same time, it seems clear that Polish policy, especially in view of the inclination towards reinsurance with the Western Democracies to which I have recently called Your Lordship's attention,⁵ would not at present aid and abet any full-dress claim for colonies on the part of the Axis Powers, and Polish officials are careful to point out that their expectations are not territorial in character.

7. In general, it may be provisionally said that the upshot of Count Ciano's visit has been to strengthen bonds of genuine friendship between Italy and Poland without leading to any political commitments. It should perhaps be added that the personality of Count Ciano does not appear to have favourably impressed those with whom he came in contact socially or politically, and that the lack of courtesy and consideration on the part of both the Count and Countess have given rise to a certain amount of criticism.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Rome, Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

⁵ See No. 139.

Letter from Mr. Holman (Berlin) to Mr. Strang (Received March 11)

[C 2898/19/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, March 3, 1939

Your letter C 2141/19/18 of February 20.¹ International guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.

You will remember that in our telegram No. 33² we gave you an account of Chvalkovsky's interview with Ribbentrop as recorded to Ogilvie-Forbes by his Czech colleague. We have nothing to show that Ribbentrop raised any specific conditions for the guarantee of Czecho-Slovak neutrality. In fact, the 'National Zeitung' at the time stated that the visit had not taken place for the purpose of discussing or of paving the way for any new conceptions of foreign policy (see our telegram Saving No. 28³). On the other hand there is no reason to suppose that the four points mentioned in your letter were not discussed during the interview, without being linked with the question of a guarantee. For instance the Jew issue played a prominent part in the conversations as you will have seen from our telegram No. 33, whilst the question of privileges for the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia formed the subject of our telegram Saving No. 41.⁴ We have no evidence however to the effect that the question of the denunciation of existing politico-military treaties or the non-establishment of industries in Czecho-Slovakia without German consent were discussed, although the latter point is referred to in the final paragraph of our telegram Saving No. 28, and may well have been included in the general question of the necessity of establishing proper commercial relations between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia. It is, of course, on the cards that, if and when the question of an international guarantee comes up for discussion, the points enumerated in your letter may well be used as indispensable conditions of Germany's consent.

ADRIAN HOLMAN

¹ Not printed. In this letter Mr. Strang reported information received by the Foreign Office that M. Chvalkovsky was told, at his recent visit to Berlin, by Herr von Ribbentrop that Germany would be willing to guarantee the territorial integrity of Czecho-Slovakia only on condition that the Czecho-Slovak Government fell in with German wishes as follows: (i) All Jews were to be eliminated from the Czecho-Slovak public service. (ii) No new industries were to be established in Czecho-Slovakia (especially if they were liable to compete with industry in the Sudeten area), without German consent. (iii) Special privileges were to be granted to the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia. (iv) All existing 'politico-military' treaties to which Czecho-Slovakia was a party must be denounced.

² No. 4.

³ No. 2.

⁴ No. 60.

No. 175

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 5, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 39 Telegraphic [C 2632/92/55]

WARSAW, March 4, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 22.¹

If convenient M. Beck would arrive in London by the Nord Express on the afternoon of Monday, April 3, and would stay there for April 4 and 5. If however not inconvenient [*sic* ?convenient] he is quite prepared to come during the last days of the previous week though he would prefer the dates suggested. Mme Beck will not accompany him.

2. He proposes when his official visit is over possibly to stay a few more days in England in a private capacity and presumes there would be no objection. He suggested that his visit should be regarded as semi-official so as to minimize ceremony.

3. As regards subject for discussion he stated that beyond a general *tour d'horizon* and question of colonies, Jews and Danzig he had nothing to suggest. On questions of colonies and Jews he had no intention of making embarrassing demands of His Majesty's Government, but merely felt it might be useful if he fully explained the attitude of the Polish Government. With regard to Danzig he felt that the Reich were taking a reasonable attitude even despite recent events there and while he did not think there would be any further developments before his visit he would inform me if there were.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of March 2 Sir H. Kennard was asked to inquire what dates M. Beck was intending to suggest for his visit to London.

No. 176

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 7)

No. 21 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2718/54/18]

WARSAW, March 5, 1939

My telegram No. 36.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me yesterday that excitement regarding recent incidents in Danzig had largely died down. Herr Greiser and Polish High Commissioner had returned there and the former had shown a friendly disposition and desire to reach an amicable settlement which M. Beck hoped might shortly be reached. The Polytechnic would shortly be re-opened and some understanding to avoid future incidents of this kind would no doubt be found.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 161.

No. 177

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 7)

No. 22 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2726/1321/55]

WARSAW, March 5, 1939

My telegram No. 38.¹

I asked M. Beck yesterday what he could tell me regarding the visit of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs. He told me that while there could not be said to be any concrete results he was satisfied as to the reasonable attitude of the Italian Government, more especially in regard to their relations with France. Count Ciano had said categorically that Italy had no intention of attempting to secure satisfaction of her demands by any aggressive measures and hoped that it would be possible to settle all differences by negotiation.

I took the opportunity to ask M. Beck how the French Alliance with Poland² would operate in the event of Italy attacking France. M. Beck stated that the Alliance had been concluded many years ago when there was no idea of regarding Italy as a potential enemy and that the military understandings accompanying it had not contemplated any such eventuality. He therefore could not express a definite opinion on the subject and stated that while the treaty did not in any way specify the aggressor it would be a matter for consideration with the Polish Government.

As regards the situation in Eastern Europe, Count Ciano had been fully in sympathy with Polish efforts to secure understanding between Hungary and Roumania and felt that it was most important that this should be achieved. M. Beck was evasive when I asked him if the question of a common frontier between Poland and Hungary had been discussed, but I imagine he did not receive much encouragement from the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs. They had agreed however that Czecho-Slovakia was still unstable and that one must be prepared for a possible further disintegration of that country.

Repeated to Rome and Prague.

¹ Not printed.

² The Franco-Polish Treaty of 1921 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 118, p. 342. The Treaty of 1925 is printed *ibid.* Vol. 122, p. 287.

No. 178

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 6, 9.0 p.m.)

No. 40 Telegraphic [C 2687/2687/55]

WARSAW, March 6, 1939, 6.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 20 Saving.¹

I had some conversation yesterday with the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs who has made an excellent impression here. He told me that

¹ Not printed. This telegram of March 5 reported the arrival on a visit to Warsaw of the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

he was more than satisfied with the result of his visit as it had shown that Poland's and Roumania's views on the majority of questions of common interest were now identical. He admitted that during the past few months there had been a certain divergence but whereas the Roumanian Government had formerly opposed the common frontier between Poland and Hungary they realised that as communications between Roumania and the main part of Czecho-Slovakia were now in any case cut, further opposition was pointless. What chance there was of a common frontier being realised in view of German opposition he could not tell.

2. As regards relations between Roumania and Hungary he appreciated the desire of Poland and Italy that an understanding should be reached but the present difficulties were largely due to the unpopularity [*sic* ? influence] of Germany, who had no desire to see such a *rapprochement*.

3. I hear that so close have relations between Roumania and Poland become that M. Gafencu has authorised M. Beck to discuss the emigration problem of Roumanian as well as Polish Jews when he goes to London.

4. My Roumanian colleague has promised to give me further details of the visit on the departure of M. Gafencu this afternoon.

Repeated to Bucharest and Budapest.

No. 179

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 8)

No. 45 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2752/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 6, 1939

My telegram No. 46.¹

It is announced in the press that a supplementary agreement to the Czecho-Slovak—German Option Agreement² was signed on March 4, prolonging the option period until June 30.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 156.

² See Volume III of this Series, Appendix V, Document (v).

No. 180

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 8)

No. 46 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2773/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 6, 1939

Relations between Czechs and Slovaks seem to be heading for a crisis.

The Slovak Ministers Sidor and Teplansky visited Prague last week to discuss matters of common interest. According to the official communiqué the discussions covered so wide a field that it was found impossible to reach a conclusion, and they are therefore to be continued this week. In a leading article on March 5, which has been widely quoted, the 'Venkov' says that

past mistakes should be forgotten on both sides and eyes turned to the present and future. The Czechs wished to reach agreement loyally with Germans and Slovaks and would honourably abide by agreements reached. But it must be made clear that the other side would equally fulfil its obligations. Experience had shown that the Germans fulfilled their obligations loyally and punctually. It was to be hoped that the same would prove true of the Slovaks.

I learn on good authority that matters have come to a head over a demand for financial assistance on the part of the Slovaks. The Czechs declared themselves prepared to give it subject to suitable guarantees that the Slovaks intended to pursue a policy of loyalty to Czecho-Slovakian State, a matter on which recent utterances of Slovak leaders left room for doubt. The Slovaks are believed also to have demanded an undue measure of independence in army matters.

What role, if any, Germany is playing in the dispute is a matter for conjecture but it may be noted that the Slovak Minister of Commerce and Minister of Transport visited Berlin last week accompanied by experts. Meanwhile relations between Slovaks and the Government and its German minority have been showing certain signs of strain.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 181

Minute from Colonel Mason-MacFarlane (Berlin) to Sir N. Henderson¹

[C 2888/15/18]

BERLIN, March 6, 1939

The Ambassador.

1. I saw my Polish colleague today. He has recently returned from Warsaw where he was present during the visit of Count Ciano.

2. He told me that the anti-German demonstrations staged during Count Ciano's visit were intended to convey to Count Ciano that although Poland appreciated Italy's friendship, there could be no question of Poland being drawn into the orbit of the Axis. Poland's friendship for Italy goes back a long way, and the memory of services rendered to Poland in the past by Italians who fought for Poland's freedom is still green.

3. According to Colonel Szymanski, Italy has by no means given up hope of establishing a combination to act as a barrier to Germany's progress eastward, in spite of what he always refers to as the 'tragedy of Czechoslovakia' last autumn.

4. The question of German action in the Ukraine has temporarily become less acute. On the last occasion on which I saw Colonel Szymanski—about two months ago—he was most exercised and outspoken on this subject. He considers however that Germany has only shelved her plans for the Ukraine

¹ This minute was enclosed in a letter from Mr. Holman (Berlin) to Mr. Strang, and was received in the Foreign Office on March 10.

for the moment—largely as a result of the many obvious difficulties which only became apparent to the Germans after their first wave of 'Greater Germany exaltation'. The Poles have definite information of at least 500 German agitators who are busily at work in the Russian Ukraine; the various German-Ukrainian organisations in Berlin have not relaxed their activities; and various Government Departments continue to maintain sections which deal exclusively with the Ukraine question and are apparently working at high pressure.

5. Colonel Szymanski was most exercised at rumours that the Anti-Comintern Pact was to be amplified by a military alliance between Germany, Japan and Italy. I gathered from him that although the Polish Government are doubtful whether Signor Mussolini would agree to such an alliance, they are very much afraid that a secret military alliance between Germany and Japan has already taken shape.

6. The Polish Government have definite information of an agreement reached last year between Germany and Japan by which Germany recognises 'Japan's right to expansion as far west as Lake Baikal, in return for Germany's right to expansion as far as the Caucasus'. The Japanese Embassy in Warsaw is continually endeavouring to sound the Poles as to when they propose to take joint action with Germany against Russia, and is always striving to prevent bad blood between Poland and Germany.

7. Colonel Szymanski assured me that during this generation there can be no possibility of Poland combining *aggressively* with Germany against Russia or vice versa. On the other hand Poland has no intention whatever of knuckling under to Germany in any way, and is practically convinced that Herr Hitler's aim is the complete domination of Europe and more probably world hegemony.

8. During a recent conversation with the German Military Attaché in Moscow, Colonel Szymanski gained the impression that although the Germans considered the Russian Services to be incapable of offensive action on a large scale, they were still very far from convinced that they were negligible as regards defensive action, and would be liable to spring a most unpleasant surprise on the many people who rate them so low at the moment. This, he said, was also the Polish view. He described the relations between Moscow and Warsaw as being excellent, and went out of his way to make it clear how smoothly and almost cordially business between the two Governments was now being conducted.

9. The Polish Authorities have practically no evidence of any reduction in the speed or scope of Germany's armament programme. On the contrary they have apparently any amount of information that, especially as regards the Air Force and the Navy, there has been a definite increase of effort during the past six weeks. They estimate that by the end of the year Germany will have at least 8000 first line aircraft; that the number of Air Divisions is eventually to be raised from 6 to 18; and that at least one 'transport' Air Division is in process of formation.

10. Colonel Szymanski told me that in Poland the present year is held to

be a very critical one, and that if we can weather it successfully Herr Hitler's best opportunity for forcing a major issue—should he be mad enough to wish to do so—will probably have disappeared. In view of Germany's economic and internal difficulties, the hectic international situation, and Germany's feverish military activity, it is perfectly possible that Herr Hitler, who bases his appreciations on biased information supplied by his intimate advisers headed by von Ribbentrop, *might* conceivably be tempted to fight himself out of his difficulties. In spite of all contrary opinions the Poles are none too sure that Signor Mussolini would act as an effective brake. On the other hand they consider that a war of this description would see Italy and Germany fighting in *Europe* quite alone and unsupported by any other country—even Hungary or Czecho-Slovakia.

11. Polish dreams are centred round the possibility of an Anglo-French-Italian *rapprochement*. They look upon this as the sole hope as regards keeping Nazi ambitions in check. They hold that Germany has already practically committed economic suicide. Even if Herr Hitler decides to increase his productive industry at the expense of unproductive activities, he will be unlikely to find markets. And to have any hope of finding markets he must start to trade 'fair' and not 'Nazi'. If he does this the Mark must inevitably crash.

12. Colonel Szymanski has been seven years in Berlin. He fought in the German Army in the War and knows his Germany. He never 'opens up' unless he is apprehensive on Poland's behalf. I am pretty certain he told me all the above in good faith. He volunteered nothing on the subject of German-Russian trade conversations or about Danzig, and I did not raise these points.

13. He complained bitterly about the many rumours and malicious reports which have been recently circulating in Germany. He attributes the bulk of them to the local Propaganda Ministry, and considers that they are spread about by the Nazi Government with the deliberate intention of keeping the international atmosphere disturbed, and the Press supplied with propaganda against the Democracies. He repeated several times that concessions to Germany without something *more concrete than promises* in return are regarded in Germany only as signs of weakness.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE,
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 182

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 57 [C 2808/92/55]

DANZIG, March 6, 1939

My Lord,

For the reasons indicated in § 6 of my secret despatch No. 231¹ of the 21st December last regarding the League of Nations High Commissioner

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 440.

here, I am reluctant again to depart from my policy of merely reporting, rather than commenting upon, events as they occur here, but, as I am aware, from my copy of Foreign Office telegram No. 72 to Paris,² of the considerations which are influencing the decision as to whether the High Commissioner should return to Danzig, I venture once more most respectfully to submit a few observations on the subject so that it might not afterwards be felt that I had been remiss in pointing out certain contingencies which seem to me to be inherent in the situation.

2. Realising the difficulties of the High Commissioner's position here, I gave him the fullest possible credit in my Annual Political Report for 1938,³ and especially in § 6 of that report, for such relatively meagre successes as his policy of personal persuasion had been able to achieve so long as the situation here remained passive; but, as explained in § 7 *et seq* of that report, from the time that it became active following the September crisis, and the murder of Herr vom Rath, all Professor Burckhardt's efforts, including flying visits to Berlin, Munich and Warsaw, entirely failed to influence the altered situation with the result that his position and that of the League in Danzig became ludicrous.

3. The Constitution of the Free City has been violated in so many ways that little of it now remains intact; the problem of the Jewish minority is rapidly disappearing with the forced mass emigration from Danzig of all except the Polish Jews, who are also returning to Poland as rapidly as possible; any problem of the Polish minority can be amicably adjusted between Poland and Danzig or even Germany, if she is involved, when it suits their convenience to do so, as in the case of the recent student disorders here. Should it not suit their convenience, I am satisfied that neither Professor Burckhardt nor any other League of Nations High Commissioner could now influence matters to any appreciable extent.

4. In the circumstances, although, as explained in § 9 of my despatch No. 231, Professor Burckhardt seems anxious to prolong his anomalous position here as long as possible, my conscientious and considered conviction is that his presence here can no longer safeguard either the Constitution, the Minorities or the status of the Free City itself.

5. If, however, it is decided to use those considerations as pretexts to justify the High Commissioner's return to Danzig for some ulterior motive, such as a desire to conciliate Poland, that is of course a matter about which I am not competent to express an opinion.

6. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin and Warsaw.

I have, &c.,
G. SHEPHERD

² No. 164.

³ Not printed.

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 81 [N 1292/233/38]

MOSCOW, March 6, 1939

My Lord,

The question of the vitality, or instability, of the Soviet régime is of so great an importance in these critical times as to warrant considered examination, and I therefore asked those members of my staff who have had at least two years' service in this country to give me the benefit of their views. The memoranda compiled by Colonel Firebrace, Wing Commander Hallawell, Mr. Maclean and Mr. Todd, of which I have the honour to enclose copies herein, provide most interesting reading; they cover fully the problem of what the press is apt to call 'Russia's approaching collapse' from every side—political, economic and military—whether in these comparatively piping times of peace or in conditions of war; and I have no hesitation in commending them to Your Lordship's attention.

2. The general trend of these memoranda, confirmed by opinions expressed to me by the more experienced Heads of Missions here, is to show that the Soviet régime is as firmly established as any régime can reasonably expect to be, that—like its Tsarist predecessor—it is Russian, and will therefore be exposed to great internal stress in the event of an offensive or long-continued war, but that it differs from the Russia of the Tsars in that it possesses a stronger moral stamina to stand the strain arising from natural conditions and a certain inborn inefficiency.

3. It would be an impertinence in a new arrival to do more than express general concurrence with these views; but I may be allowed to add a few comments, in the same sense, based on comparisons between certain aspects of the Russia of my student days and corresponding conditions under the Soviet régime.

4. In a country with so bovine a population as Russia, a revolutionary movement, to be successful, must have for its driving power a dissatisfied, cohesive and actively-minded class (not merely a few individuals), and for its attractive power some clearly recognisable and valuable booty within reach of the million.

5. Pre-war Russia had the requisite class in the form of the students and younger *intelligentsia*, whose idealism and hectic—to an Englishman almost insane—enthusiasms lashed them into fury in their attempts to find an outlet. My friends were most of them wretchedly poor, and chafed at the blatant opulence of the ruling cliques; the dead weight of lethargy which infected the whole Tsarist régime seemed to deny most of them any future save that of joining the ranks of the under-paid and despised petty 'tchinovniki' (officials). Their position was perhaps not really so hopeless; but that was their impression, and the Government did nothing to remove it, for those were not the days of modern propaganda, which can almost make anybody believe anything. Conditions are now reversed, and the same class must constitute the

most enthusiastic supporters of the present régime. They are poor, but so is everyone else; far from living in a land of no opportunity, they know—and can see with their own eyes—that there is no limit to the number of technical and scientific jobs calling out to be filled; all that they read, all that they hear, of what Soviet energy and modernity can offer them round the next corner or at the end of the next five-year plan intoxicates them with the headiest of promises. There is no material for would-be agitators here; every student leaves his university or technical college sure of work, of creative and exciting work, and an all-pervasive propaganda teaches him that he is working in a community power-plant or a community laboratory, as the case may be, for the profit of himself and his likes, not for the enrichment of a Morris or a Mond.

6. As regards the humbler classes, I am precluded (by my guardian-devils of the police who dog my every movement abroad) from any possibility of acquiring first-hand knowledge, or even impressions. But, now that the famine years of the thirties have been survived, I am convinced that the present régime can have nothing to fear from a population which in the past bore so patiently the unspeakable conditions of the factory hands in the towns or the privations tolerated by my old friends the mujiks in the Government of Vitebsk. As pointed out by Mr. Maclean, it took three years of war to excite a revolution out of an army which had been stinted even of rifles in the front lines, out of factory workers in St. Petersburg, who saw that the luxury of the rich was in no wise curbed by the war, out of the peasants, whose greed could be stimulated by the offer of the properties of the big landowners. Now, even in war time, there will be no landed proprietors to be plundered or idle rich to be despoiled; while the army, and the soldiers' relatives behind the line, will know—and be emphatically told—that the whole energy of the Government will be thrown into the work of supply.

7. The present-day population is, moreover, kept in ignorance of its true condition by modern anæsthetics or dopes, which were unknown in my time and on which I need not expatiate, namely, the cinema and the wireless. Their influence is immeasurably strengthened by the rigid withholding of any news from abroad that might lead to the making of unfortunate comparisons, while the restrictions on foreign travel work powerfully in the same direction; in both these matters the Tsarist technique was comparatively lax. Moreover, the remarkable extension of primary education—astonishing to me, who remember the almost total illiteracy of pre-war days—works here, as elsewhere, towards making the semi-literate groundlings an easy prey to propaganda relentlessly applied.

8. Finally, I would add that the discontented have outlets or safety-valves that did not exist of old, such as all the 'self-criticism' in press and community meetings. As regards the more persistent irreconcilables or plotters, too, I used often to wonder at the futility of Tsarist methods. True, those were the namby-pamby days when in Russia, as in the rest of Europe, human life was treated with a consideration out of which we have now grown. But, even so, the system under which exile, and not death, was the punishment awarded

to conspirators, save in the case of bombers and assassins, seemed to me inadequate; exile was far from being permanent, while, in any case—whether in Siberia or abroad—the plotters continued busily plotting, as the perusal of the lives of most eminent Bolsheviks will show. The Soviet technique has a 'short way with dissenters' which is immeasurably more effective.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

ENCLOSURE I IN No. 183

Memorandum 'A'

The Political Stability of the Soviet Union, by Mr. Maclean

MOSCOW, March 6, 1939

The point of view of this Embassy has for some time past been that, except in the event of a war or of a collapse of the economic system, there is no reason to anticipate anything in the nature of a political upheaval in the Soviet Union. It is now also desired to form some estimate of how the existing Soviet régime would stand up to the strain of a war: in other words, to determine what danger there would be of a political upheaval in the event of a war. Before, however, considering the repercussions which a state of war would be likely to have, it is perhaps worth first re-examining the factors which account for the absence of any effective or even evident opposition to the tyranny at present existing in this country, and render unlikely the appearance of any such opposition unless the equilibrium of the Soviet State should be disturbed by a major catastrophe.

2. There can be little doubt that the primary reason for the failure of the population to react against a reign of terror unequalled even in the history of Russia is the almost unbelievable passivity of the Russian character. But to this natural passivity, which was for so long the salvation of the Tsarist régime, must be added other factors which did not exist, or existed to a lesser extent, before 1917, and which are largely the outcome of the revolution and of the twenty years of Soviet rule which have succeeded it. An essential reason for the absence not only of active opposition, but even of serious discontent, is the complete lack of contacts with the outer world, and consequently of all valid standards of comparison. It must be remembered that no ordinary Soviet citizen under forty has any first-hand knowledge of any system of government other than the Soviet régime, or of any country except his own. The vast majority of the population have never come into contact with a foreigner. Such knowledge as they possess of the capitalist world is entirely derived from Soviet propaganda. But, while they have no means of comparing present conditions with conditions existing in other countries and under other political systems and consequently cannot realise how deplorably the Soviet Union contrasts with the more civilised capitalist countries, they can, and do, compare them with the conditions which have existed in this country at different times since the revolution, and are apt to reach the quite under-

standable conclusion that in some respects, at any rate, things are better than they were. Furthermore, though class distinctions exist and are in a number of ways very clearly marked, the difference between the life led by the upper and the lower classes is not so glaring as in most capitalist countries and consequently less likely to inspire envy and bitterness. Moreover, the humbler members of the community at least have, for what it is worth, the satisfaction of knowing that no one is sufficiently exalted to be necessarily out of reach of the 'purge', and that the lowest of the low can aspire to the highest positions in the State, provided they be sufficiently thrusting and unscrupulous. Consequently, the average Soviet citizen, though he or she may complain of certain specific hardships, does not tend to criticise the régime as such. In short, twenty years of a totalitarian régime, coupled with hermetical isolation, have produced a nation which accepts blindly the existing system because it knows no other, and swallows the grotesque conception of life forced upon it because, unaided, it can conceive of no other. It is scarcely surprising that the rulers of this country are at pains to maintain the vacuum in which the system which they have created is so jealously preserved.

3. It may, of course, be argued that the revolution of 1917 was not made by the masses, but by a discontented and active minority; and, indeed, it is probable that there are at the present time not a few individuals who are bitterly opposed to the existing system and hostile to those responsible for it. It is, however, not easy to see how under present circumstances anything in the nature of an effective opposition movement could be organised. The policy of M. Stalin, in whose view prevention is better than cure, has been to eliminate any potential opponents before their opposition has had time to take form, and his system of checks and balances has been carried so far that it is inconceivable, at any rate to the Soviet mind, that any group of citizens, whether they be the workers in a factory or on a farm, the crew of a ship, the officials of a government department, the officers of a regiment, or simply the members of a family or the five or six inmates of the average Soviet bedroom, should not include its due proportion of police spies, furnishing regular reports on every act of their companions. It must be remembered that the Soviet child who denounces (and thus secures the 'liquidation' of) his father for ideological incorrectness is considered to be deserving of a high measure of praise. In short, the chances that the smallest indiscretion will pass unnoticed are small and the penalty for indiscretion is 'liquidation'. Under such a reign of terror little feeling of personal loyalty survives, and mutual suspicion and distrust have been so highly developed amongst all classes of the population that it is difficult to see how any nucleus of opposition could be formed or, if formed, could survive. True, the investigations of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and the confessions of the accused at the State trials have 'revealed' the existence of opposition '*blocs*' and '*centres*', under the leadership of men who held, in many cases up to the time of their arrest, the highest positions in the State, and with ramifications in every part of the country and in every branch of Soviet life. It is, however,

scarcely necessary to say that these 'revelations' cannot be taken at anything approaching their face value and that, for the reasons set out above, it seems more than unlikely that any such subversive organisations could in fact have existed or that the alleged conspirators could have done more than indulge in indiscreet criticism of existing institutions or in vague speculation as to the future.

4. Whatever the results which such repression might produce elsewhere in Soviet Russia it has shown itself remarkably effective; and it is hard at times to resist the conclusion that the system of government evolved by M. Stalin, however abominable, represents, from his personal point of view, at any rate, which would seem to put the interests of the dictator before the interests of the State, the maximum of stability and possibly the only satisfactory method of governing Russia. However this may be, it would require a confirmed optimist to prophesy with any certainty in the light of past history that a revolution would produce a radical change for the better.

5. To sum up, the principal factors making for political stability in this country at the present time are the unbelievable passivity of the population; the lack of all contacts with the outer world and consequent lack of all valid standards of comparison; the impossibility, in the face of all-pervading police control, of organising opposition; and, finally, the absence of any apparent alternative which might serve as an incentive. The power of a war or other major catastrophe to undermine this stability would depend on the degree in which it led to the disappearance of these factors, and, above all, caused the weakening of police control. It remains to consider the extent to which a war would be likely to produce such an effect.

6. It is clear that much would depend on circumstances, and, in particular, on the duration of the conflict and the course followed by it. For example, a prolonged and unsuccessful war would be likely to have more serious repercussions internally than a short and victorious one. Much, too, would depend on whether the war was offensive or defensive, and on whether the country was invaded or not. Similarly, the régime would have less to fear from a war localised in the Far East than from a war in the West or on both fronts, which would affect more directly and to a greater extent the life of the country as a whole.

7. It is hard to estimate the degree of pent-up bitterness which may have been engendered by the present reign of terror, and it is consequently hard to estimate the degree of danger involved in putting arms into the hands of the population. On the whole, however, it seems unlikely that the mere transition from a state of peace to a state of war would suffice to produce any political reaction. For one thing, the Soviet Union lives too nearly on a war footing for the shock to be a very great one. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to imagine that there is no such thing as Soviet patriotism. It would thus be certain consequences liable to arise out of a state of war, rather than the state of war itself, which would be likely to upset the régime.

8. It seems safe to assume that one consequence of Soviet participation in a war would be a further disastrous drop in the already disastrously low

standard of living of the population, as a result, mainly, of increased concentration of the national resources on heavy industry and, in particular, on the armaments industry, and of a corresponding falling-off in the already completely inadequate production of consumer's goods and food-stuffs, of which a large proportion would in any case be monopolised for the use of the armed forces. It is possible that such a state of affairs would lead to strikes and food riots, but it is hard to see how active resistance of the kind could come to anything, or, indeed, could even be initiated without a previous weakening of control. It remains to consider in what manner such a relaxation of control might come about.

9. It is to be assumed that the entry of the Soviet Union into a war would, in the first instance, be followed by an even greater tightening up, if possible, of police supervision. On the one hand, this might be accompanied by an intensification of the spy mania and by the wholesale 'liquidation' on charges of treachery of military, political and economic leaders on a scale comparable to that of the past two years, which, in time of war, might in itself be sufficient to provoke an outburst. On the other hand, war might have a sobering effect and lead to a more rational policy in this respect. It seems likely, however, that much would depend on the fortunes of the Soviet forces in the field. Recent years have furnished abundant proof that the population of this country will endure oppression and deprivation in almost any degree without any attempt whatever at resistance. Were military defeats, however, coupled with the dislocation of transport and commissariat arrangement and a considerable fall in the standard of living, to lead to disaffection and mutinies among the troops, there might well be some response from a civil population which, in all conscience, has already sufficient reason for complaint; and it is conceivable that in these circumstances the established authorities might lose control of the situation.

10. Such, approximately, was the situation arrived at in 1917, when food riots, strikes, and mutinies in the military and naval forces led to a state of disorder which the Tsar's Government was unable to control and which led to its downfall. It must, however, be remembered that in the years before 1917 there existed, under the comparatively liberal rule of the Tsarist Government, a well-organised, widespread and active revolutionary Opposition, represented in Parliament and with its own legally published newspaper. Even so, after one disastrous war and an abortive revolution, three years of a further disastrous war and a further revolution were required before the established régime could be overthrown. At the present time, on the other hand, there is, as has already been indicated, no reason to suppose that anything that could be described as an organised Opposition exists in this country, and it is not clear how such an Opposition could come into being, at any rate until events had led to the partial disintegration of the existing *état policier*. Nor does it seem likely that those who inwardly detest the present régime have any concrete alternative in mind, while they have perpetually before them the dreadful results of the last revolution. And, indeed, it seems most probable that, were another revolution to take place,

it would be followed once again by a period of chaos, and, after that, by the establishment of a fresh tyranny, which, it seems, is the only type of government fit for this country. It may be added that a collapse of the Central Government would almost certainly be the signal for separatist movements in the National Republics, which, if supported from outside, might lead to the disintegration of the Soviet State as it at present exists.

11. In short, while participation in a war might well have an unsettling effect on this country internally, it is not possible to conclude that an internal political upheaval would necessarily ensue. At the same time, it would be a grave mistake, in the event of a war, to count on a consistent and reasonably stable policy on the part of the Soviet Government. Apart from the repercussions which the inevitably chaotic state of communications and supplies would be bound to have on the conduct of the war, sudden and drastic changes of policy on the part of the Government would have to be reckoned with. It must be remembered that Soviet policy is purely opportunist and that its ultimate aims in no way correspond to those pursued, to take one example, by the Western Democracies, so that, were they to consider that their own interests or those of the Soviet Union required it, the rulers of this country would not scruple to change horses in mid-stream.

F. H. R. M.

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 183

Memorandum 'B'

The Red Army, by Colonel Firebrace

The peace strength of the Red army is approximately 110 infantry divisions, 35 cavalry divisions, 5 mechanised corps—a total of about 1,600,000 men with 9,000 tanks. With vast numbers of trained reserves, its theoretical expansion in war is great and only limited by the production of arms and equipment for new formations. It is probable that plans have been made for the early mobilisation of about 170 infantry and 35 cavalry divisions, though it is doubtful whether equipment is yet available for all of them. The Red army, however, should be able to mobilise at least 100 infantry and 30 cavalry divisions within three months for service on the western front. For the Far East about 32 infantry and 5 cavalry divisions could be mobilised against the Japanese.

The Red army might be faced with two different tasks, one of defending the Soviet Union against an attack by Germany, and possibly Japan, and the other of undertaking an offensive either in fulfilment of treaty obligations or as an act of policy. The value of the Red army in these two cases would vary greatly.

Before the beginning of the 'purge' in 1937 the Red army was a numerically large, well-equipped force with an untried command. Its tactical doctrines were unsound and its administration suspect. It was doubtful whether it could have efficiently conducted an offensive war. Since 1937 it has been

ruthlessly 'purged' of its senior officers, the former High Command having practically disappeared, and it has been subjected to a form of extreme political control which in effect results in dual command. As a result of this, discipline, which was formerly good, has weakened owing to the lack of authority of the commanders. The 'purge' in industry must also have weakened the power of the country to provide the war needs of the army and the civil population. In spite of the great efforts which are undoubtedly being made by the High Command to organise and train the army for war, the 'purge' has more than neutralised their efforts, and the value of the army for offensive operations has largely declined. The numerical superiority of the Red army over the Soviet Union's possible initial opponent, Poland, is, however, probably sufficiently great to allow of an advance into that country being made to a certain depth, after which it may be supposed that inefficient command, and in particular administrative difficulties, would quickly bring the advance to a standstill. This possibility might, however, have a restraining influence on Poland.

If the Red army leaders are sufficiently competent to form a fair appreciation of the efficiency of the Red army, their advice to the Government should be against undertaking offensive operations. It is, however, by no means certain that they realise or dare admit the weakness of the Red army as an attacking force. The danger of mobilising the reserves, who may at the present time be discontented, would also have to be considered. The Red army itself can be considered as loyal to the régime, and there is no question of its refusing to fight or of revolting in the early stages of the war. In the later stages trouble for the régime is more likely to be caused by the sufferings of the civil population than by discontent in the army, though it would easily spread to the latter.

In defence of Soviet territory the Red army, whilst still suffering from all the weaknesses already mentioned, is likely to be stronger. Its numerical superiority will be of greater value, and its fighting spirit enhanced. The poor communications, both in railways and roads, will in themselves work against the invader. Under these circumstances the Red army would still prove a formidable obstacle, and it is not thought likely that any immediate collapse of its fighting efficiency is to be expected. It is doubtful, however, whether the country could stand up long to the strain of a war.

Conclusions.

(a) The Red army is at present loyal to the régime and would fight, if ordered to, either in an offensive or a defensive war.

(b) It has suffered severely from the 'purge', but would still prove a serious obstacle to an attacker.

(c) In an offensive war it has much less value, but could probably make an initial advance into Poland.

(d) The Red army considers a war inevitable and is undoubtedly being strenuously prepared for it.

*Memorandum 'C'**The Soviet Air Force, by Wing Commander Hallawell*

The Soviet air force has now between 4,000 and 5,000 aircraft held in first-line units. These are divided into two forces, approximately in the ratio of three to one as between the West and the Far East. These two forces are organised independently, and, in a political situation that might lead to war on both fronts simultaneously, any large reinforcement of one front by the other, even if practicable, is not likely.

The number of aircraft held on the western front is probably in the region of 3,300, a number which approximates to Germany's first-line strength. A consideration of the efficiency of Russian air equipment, however, gives a totally different picture of her strength. Included in this number are some 500 obsolete heavy bombers, which it would be suicidal to launch against a real air defence. There are also 1,260 old and out-dated biplanes, which are allotted for direct co-operation with the army. Their value depends entirely on the nature and extent of air opposition. One hundred and forty aged flying-boats are also included in this strength. The remaining aircraft may be considered reasonably modern and consist of about 1,000 fighters capable of short-range duties and 420 medium bombers with a radius of action of about 450 miles.

For a war on the western front it is convenient to consider the value for war of the Soviet air force under two headings:—

- (1) Independent air operations against German vital centres.
- (2) Air operations in direct support of the army plan, which may be either offensive or defensive.

Independent air operations against German vital centres could only reasonably be undertaken by the medium bombers. The range of these aircraft, however, would make it necessary for them to be based forward on foreign territory. This would involve either an alliance with Poland, or an advance into Polish territory. It has been suggested above that a military advance into Poland might not get very far and would soon be brought to a standstill by administrative and supply difficulties. The air force would equally be involved in these difficulties, and would be unlikely to develop any great attack on Germany. An alliance with Poland is thus the only means of operating these aircraft under this heading. Their operational efficiency, however, would drop once they became involved in the administrative problems of operating from forward bases. In any event, considering the quality of the aircraft and their crews, they might find the German defence too strong for them; but they would constitute a threat, and pin down some of Germany's defensive units.

The air force would be far more effective in direct support of the military plan. This would permit the employment of the large number of fighters in protective duties, and in ground attack. The old army co-operational air-

craft might even achieve something by virtue of their numbers alone. Operating from their peace-time aerodromes, the air force would not suddenly be confronted with additional administrative problems, and could probably sustain operations for a few months. If, however, the enemy put forward a few well-trained air units, the Soviet air force would suffer very large casualties.

The danger to the Soviet air force would come as much from the rear as from air opposition. The strain of war might prove too much for the national services to be maintained. Once local fuel and bomb reserves had become exhausted, the transport system might not succeed in maintaining supplies. The breakdown of the transport system, which would meet increasing strain, would certainly be accelerated by a little well-applied bombing by the enemy.

Conclusions.

(1) The Soviet air force is capable of developing little offensive power against Germany, unless operating in concert with Poland. This power would even then be limited.

(2) Considered as part of the army machine, it can be counted on to give useful assistance to army operations for a time; but, like the army, it is likely to be brought to a standstill as much by the collapse of essential services as by enemy action.

ENCLOSURE 4 IN No. 183

Memorandum 'D'

The Economic Situation in the Soviet Union, by Mr. Todd

The question whether the Soviet economic apparatus could be greatly expanded to meet the demands which would be made upon it should the country be involved in war within the next few months, is one upon which it is difficult to pronounce any definite opinion. Known factors, such as lessened productivity of labour, lack of sufficient technical skill, mistakes in planning and constant changes in the higher personnel of factories, seem to indicate its inability to do so, especially in a war of long duration.

Since 1936, which was the peak year of production, there has been a steady decline, and plans have not been fulfilled. In that year heavy industry, light industry and the food industry completed the annual plan, as a result chiefly of increased labour productivity, which was 22·4 per cent. higher than in the previous year. The figures were:—

Heavy industry, output 33 per cent. more than in 1935; light industry, 34 per cent.; food industry, 28·6 per cent. Industry as a whole exceeded the planned production figure by 6 per cent.

In 1937 heavy industry output was 6·8 per cent. more than in 1936, but only 88·9 per cent. of the plan, which was fixed at 21 per cent. more; light industry showed an increase of 11·2 per cent., but was only 92·1 per cent. of the plan, which was fixed at 20·7 per cent. more; the output of the food

industry was more by 13·6 per cent., but the plan foreshadowed an increase of 16·4 per cent.

As regards 1938, the planned increase for heavy industry was fixed at 16 per cent.; but, if calculated on the basis of the 88·9 per cent. alleged fulfilment in 1937, output for 1938 was to be only 5 per cent. more than that planned for 1937, and the planned increase for light industry, 13 per cent., while that of the food industry was 12 per cent. Final figures of output are not available, but preliminary results give a 12 per cent. increase over 1937 for all Commissariats (see Mr. Vereker's despatch No. 35 E. of the 21st January¹).

These figures tend to show that production is increasing; but the position is in reality unsatisfactory, because the plan was not fulfilled by most branches of industry, including such important ones as coal, petroleum, timber, transport, iron and steel, &c.

A weak link in the Government's defence chain is the unsatisfactory situation with regard to the production of high-grade fuel for aviation. Considerable quantities of this are imported for consumption by the air force based in the Far East, thus relieving the strain on the refining industry in the West. There should be no difficulty in the Soviet Union supplying itself with lower-grade fuel for motor vehicles and so on during hostilities, as the extra quantity needed could be obtained by stopping exports, which were nearly 2 million tons in 1937, and 755,443 tons from January to August 1938.

No separate figures of production in the defence industry are available. They are usually lumped together with those for heavy industry and machinery construction. Thus, increased production in 1938 in heavy industry, machinery construction and defence is given as 15·1 per cent., as compared with 1937. Even if the figures for the defence industry were given separately, they would be of no practical use, because the figures in question represent value and not volume. They are in 'fixed prices of 1926-27', but as the Soviet Union never publishes any price indices, one cannot compare those fixed prices with those ruling at present. Therefore, these so-called results give no idea of the volume or the quality of production.

The allocation for the Defence Commissariat in last year's budget was 27,000 million roubles, which was 54 per cent. more than in the previous year, and is now the second largest item in the budget.

It is known that the defence industry has priority in the matter of raw materials and the best of the available skilled labour, but information as regards actual output, &c., is impossible to obtain. The services of practically all foreign specialists employed in industry have been dispensed with on account of the spy mania, and successive 'purges' have thinned the ranks of Soviet specialists. If necessary, many more men could be drafted into industry, because man (and woman) power is great; but the proportion of extra skilled workers obtainable at a given moment would probably be very small.

It is, moreover, doubtful whether the railways could cope with the enormous increase of traffic which would ensue on the outbreak of war. Last year

¹ Not printed.

there were large numbers of engines (2,100) needing capital repairs and 9,000 needing current repairs, and 32,800 trucks and 3,000 passenger carriages were in need of capital repairs, whilst 122,000 trucks and 8,000 passenger coaches needed current repairs. As regards new construction, the plan for the first nine months of 1938 was only carried out to the extent of 87 per cent. in regard to heavy locomotives and 61 per cent. in respect of large goods trucks; production fell short of the plan by eighty-three engines and over 10,000 goods trucks.

The situation as regards road vehicles is no better. The number of motor vehicles of all kinds (mostly lorries) is given as 600,000, but their condition is very bad. About half are defective and not fit for work, mostly on account of rough treatment by drivers and the great lack of tyres and vulcanising depots. Quantity rather than quality is aimed at.

The fact that the Soviet Union is trying to import armaments suggests either that the local industry cannot cope with estimated requirements or that the Soviet Government are trying to lay in large stocks. As to stocks no information is available, but it is safe to say that they must be considerable.

The defence industry is no doubt working to full capacity already, and it is difficult to see how production can be still further speeded up in view of the lack of skilled personnel. Nevertheless, the Government are exerting themselves in this direction, as is shown by the increased imports of goods for defence purposes, such as machine tools, non-ferrous metals and various other raw materials. Other steps in this direction are the decentralisation of the various Commissariats, such as those of heavy industry, the defence industry, the food industry and the machine construction industry, the decree on labour discipline and the recruitment of manual workers from collective farms to work in industry.

It must not be forgotten that any further expansion of the defence industries will involve a further reduction in the already scanty supply of general consumption goods, or, in other words, of the standard of living of the people. To what extent they would quietly submit to further sacrifices is an open question. Even now the population may be said to be on a bare subsistence level.

Apart from the question of man-power and skilled personnel, it is obvious that equipment that is operated for twenty-four hours a day will quickly wear out and that constant replacements will be necessary, as well as repairs. It is doubtful whether these replacements could be effected locally under war conditions, and it seems probable that equipment would have to be imported. If such imports became necessary on a considerable scale, production would be greatly slowed up. Then there is the question of *brak* (defective goods); this has always been high in the Soviet Union, and under the stress of war the proportion would probably increase greatly.

The answer to the whole question seems to depend upon such uncertain factors as technical skill, the productivity of labour, raw materials, the number of armaments factories, the efficiency of equipment and its rapid replacement when worn out.

No. 184

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 8)

No. 93 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2756/19/18]

BERLIN, March 7, 1939

Following statement was published by 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' on March 6.

'On March 4 a Supplementary Agreement to the Treaty of November 20 on Nationality and Options questions was signed by representatives of the German and Czecho-Slovak Governments.

'In Paragraph 2 of the latter Treaty it was provided that the Czecho-Slovak Government could up to July 10, 1939, demand that persons of German extraction and their descendants should leave present Czecho-Slovak territory if they had settled there since January 1, 1910. A corresponding right was accorded to the German Government with regard to persons of non-German extraction settled in the areas annexed to Germany since January 1, 1910.

'The Supplementary Agreement provides that the two Governments will make no use of these rights unless they come to a further understanding on the subject. Simultaneously the period of grace for the deposit of option declarations which was to expire on March 29 under the Treaty has been prolonged to June 30, 1939.'

No. 185

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 8)

No. 47 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2774/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 7, 1939

My Savingram No. 46.¹

The Czecho-Slovak Press Bureau reports that, as a result of a meeting of the Slovak Ministers on March 6, the Slovak Government regard the political and constitutional position of Slovakia as settled by the Constitutional Law on Slovak Autonomy. Tendentious speculations of certain foreign press organs regarding fundamental decisions of the Slovak Government were unfounded, as all political and economic problems, as well as the position of Slovakia with regard to the other parts of the Czecho-Slovak Federal State, were settled within the framework of the Constitutional Law. Certain members of the Slovak Government would proceed to Prague in the course of the week to negotiate with members of the Central Government regarding the settlement of various problems of the day, particularly economic problems, within the framework of the Constitutional Law on Slovak autonomy.

The immediate impression here is that this communiqué implies virtual capitulation of Slovaks.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 180.

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 24 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2873/7/12]

WARSAW, March 7, 1939

My telegram No. 22 Saving,¹ last paragraph.

Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs spoke to me last night about the Slovak movement for independence. He expressed the view that this movement was largely due to German instigation with the object of further weakening Czecho-Slovakia. But he personally thought that contrary to German expectations if Slovakia and Ruthenia attained their independence the Czecho-Slovak Government would be stronger and more capable of resisting German penetration.

2. M. Arciszewski told me that he is today to receive a member of the Slovak Government who, he understands, will put to him the following questions:—

(1) How does Poland generally regard the Slovak movement for independence?

(2) How far would Poland be prepared to guarantee the frontiers of an independent Slovakia?

(3) If unprepared to guarantee the other frontiers would Poland be prepared to guarantee the *Polish-Slovak* frontier?

(4) What attitude does Poland think Hungary would take to the independence of Slovakia?

3. M. Arciszewski proposes to reply as follows:—

(1) Poland has no desire to express any opinion as to Slovak aspirations and feels that this is a matter for the Slovaks themselves to decide, though whatever they do Poland would still regard Slovakia with sympathy.

(2) and (3) Poland would find difficulty is guaranteeing all frontiers of Slovakia, though she would of course be at once prepared to offer a guarantee for the *Polish-Slovak* frontier, as Poland has no further territorial claims in that region.

(4) Poland feels that Hungary should have no objection to raise as her territorial claims in Slovakia have been fully realised.

4. As regards Ruthenia M. Arciszewski told me that when he recently raised the question of German activities there with Herr Himmler on the latter's recent visit to Poland, Herr Himmler stated that Berlin was in no way responsible for these activities, but when M. Arciszewski stated that Vienna might be, Herr Himmler shrugged his shoulders and said that he could not be responsible for what might be done in Vienna.

5. As regards the common frontier between Poland and Hungary, M. Arciszewski voiced the general disappointment which is felt here as to the result of the visit of Count Ciano, who has clearly not the courage to do

¹ No. 177.

anything which might displease the Reich, whatever the real sympathies of Italy may be.

6. Incidentally, Count Csaky recently told a responsible American journalist (who is now in Warsaw) that it was not Germany so much as Roumania that had opposed the common frontier idea. If this is true, and as Roumanian opposition has now disappeared (see my telegram No. 40²) it seems quite possible that the common frontier may after all be realised.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague and Budapest.

² No. 178.

No. 187

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 3044/1321/55]

WARSAW, March 7, 1939

Dear Cadogan,

We have within the past six weeks had the visits of three Ministers for Foreign Affairs here, and the Polish attitude to the three visits may be roughly summarised as follows. Ribbentrop was regarded with dislike, Ciano with contempt and Gafencu with distinct sympathy. My colleagues invariably, when these visits are about to take place, run round with their hair on end anxiously demanding what the result will be, and I invariably express the opinion that nothing will come out of them. And this has apparently been true of Ribbentrop and Ciano. I do not know definitely what they hoped to attain here, but there is little doubt, I think, that from their own point of view their visits did more harm than good. Anti-German feeling is stronger than ever, and a great deal of the sympathy felt for Italy has been dispelled by Ciano's bad manners, vanity and mediocrity. Both the Poles and my colleagues have expressed themselves in no uncertain terms as to the impression which Ciano has left on them. I quote the instance mentioned by my Swedish colleague, who is a charming fellow, and was a colleague of Ciano's at Shanghai when the latter was in the Consular Service. Lagerberg, on meeting him, reminded him of this fact, to which Ciano replied: 'Oh, were we?' and hastily turned away to someone else, apparently disliking to be reminded of the fact that he ever occupied the humble position of a Consular Officer. The Poles further feel that Italy dare not do anything which might cause displeasure in Berlin, and that therefore while Italy may sympathise with the idea of a Central and East European *bloc* to resist German expansion eastward, she dare not do anything actively to support it.

2. Gafencu, on the other hand, made an excellent impression, and I must say, from what I saw of him, that I was surprised that Roumania could produce anyone with so much simplicity and intelligence. Perhaps he owes something to his Scottish blood. He has done a great deal to dispel the coolness resulting from the September crisis and the Polish attempts to secure a frontier with Hungary, and his visit may be said really to have done good to the relations between the two countries.

3. In my letter of February 22¹ to Sargent I referred to distinct signs of a *revirement* here as regards France and Great Britain. Unfortunately the feeling as regards France may be adversely affected so far as Government circles are concerned by rumours which are being spread here that the French had something to do with the student demonstrations against Germany and Beck in connexion with the recent incidents at Danzig. Arciszewski told me last night that these rumours were undoubtedly current, though there was no tangible proof of anything of the kind. Beck, he said, had at first felt that Germany was probably largely responsible, with a view to spoiling the effect of Ciano's visit. The reasonable German attitude regarding the Danzig incidents, however, had excluded this possibility. No doubt Beck's dislike and suspicion of the French would incline him to believe anything, and unfortunately both Noël and other French people here do not disguise their desire to see the last of him. You may remember that I reported that Beck told me that he did not think he would go to Paris either on his way to or from London, and one wonders how far he has been influenced by a belief that the French were behind the street demonstrations and by indiscreet Havas messages of an anti-German nature. I know that the French had intended to suggest that he should stop off in Paris, and I suppose he may still do so.

4. I shall be sending detailed notes by the next bag on the lines which Beck's talks in London might usefully follow. I will only say here that he is undoubtedly in rather a hole. His efforts to get back on to the fence, which are very welcome to public opinion here, expose him to severe German criticism and suspicions. He knows full well that Danzig is his Achilles' heel and that at any moment Germany may put on the screw with painful or even disastrous results. Public opinion over the Danzig incidents showed signs of getting out of hand and I believe that even his colleagues were becoming restive at his *coulant* attitude towards the Reich. I think (and my French colleague agrees) that it is quite possible that Beck himself spread the rumours of French instigation of the street demonstrations, and is also pushing the colonial campaign with the idea of diverting public attention and preventing the tide from setting too strongly in an anti-German and therefore anti-Beck sense.

5. I think, on the other hand, that Beck is quite keen to go to London, though I am sorry to hear that he proposes to sponsor the cause of Roumanian Jews as well as Polish. I hope you will pitch in to him strongly over the colonial campaign, about which I am sending a despatch in this bag.² I also think that Hudson's visit should do good. It is warmly welcomed here in Polish economic circles, and although, as I have explained to my colleagues, it has no political significance, any sign of British interest helps to put guts into those large sections here who do not want Poland to go totalitarian.

I am sending copies of this letter to Berlin, Rome and Bucharest.

H. W. KENNARD

¹ No. 139.

² Not printed.

No. 188

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 8, 8.50 p.m.)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 2770/17/18]

PRAGUE, March 8, 1939, 6.30 p.m.

Guarantee for Czecho-Slovakia.

I learn from the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Czecho-Slovak Minister in Berlin has been informed verbally by German State Secretary of the nature of German reply¹ to British note of February 8.² The German condition that all the other neighbouring States must be prepared to assume a similar obligation was new to M. Chvalkovsky. The German State Secretary had however specifically mentioned Poland and Hungary without mentioning Roumania who would in M. Chvalkovsky's opinion doubtless be willing to give a guarantee.

During his visit to Berlin in January only the following four conditions for a guarantee by Germany had been mentioned:

1. The eviction of Jews ('kick them all out' had been Herr von Ribbentrop's words in German).
2. The complete elimination of everyone connected with the Benes regime.
3. A reduction of the army as a prelude to neutrality and
4. A settlement with German minorities. The German Government had since been informed of Czecho-Slovak intention to cut their army down from 24 divisions to approximately 14 divisions and M. Chvalkovsky seemed to assume that they would be satisfied with this reduction. Nor did he anticipate any difficulty in maintaining good relations with German minorities.

In reply to my enquiry he assured me that relations of Czecho-Slovakia with Poland and Hungary continued to improve and that frontier had now been agreed although there might be slight changes before or during the actual demarcation. Difficulties with Slovaks which had been fomented by external propaganda had been overcome but he promised to give me further information on this subject after discussions which are taking place now.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ Enclosure in No. 171.

² Enclosure in No. 91.

No. 189

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 23 Telegraphic [C 2632/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 8, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 39.¹

1. The dates suggested by Colonel Beck are convenient. There is of course no objection to his remaining on in England in a private capacity. I am ready to fall in with his proposal to minimise ceremony.

¹ No. 175.

2. As regards subjects for discussion, the colonial question is not one which I am willing to discuss with Colonel Beck. Please make an opportunity of letting him know, as discreetly but as clearly as you can, that as there is no colonial question between the United Kingdom and Poland, there is, so far as I know, nothing to discuss.

No. 190

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 25 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2872/1321/55]

WARSAW, March 8, 1939

My telegram No. 22 Saving.¹

French Ambassador informs me that when the French alliance with Poland was concluded only Germany and Russia were considered as potential enemies. He would therefore have expected that M. Beck would immediately have told me that the alliance did not operate if France were attacked by Italy alone. The French Government, however, considered that Poland would be bound to give France military aid if Germany declared war on France in support of Italy. M. Noël, however, thinks that Germany probably would not declare war but would render military assistance to Italy by volunteers, aircraft and so forth without direct aggression on the French frontier.

My Belgian colleague was informed some weeks ago by M. Beck that in the event of direct German attack on France, Poland would fulfil the alliance both in the letter and in the spirit.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Rome.

¹ No. 177.

No. 191

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10)

No. 55 [C 2838/54/18]

WARSAW, March 8, 1939

My Lord,

In my despatch No. 43¹ of February 25 I reported that Polish-German conversations were to be conducted in Berlin regarding the complaints of ill-treatment of the respective minorities in each country. I have the honour to report that the conversations have already been suspended and I understand from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that though they cannot be said to have broken down, no date is foreseen for their renewal. From the remarks made by members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when discussing this subject, it seems clear that the Polish Government have succeeded in evading any awkward issues which the German negotiators may have raised in Berlin and that the conversations have not led to any concrete result.

¹ No. 151.

2. Meanwhile public opinion has again been unfavourably impressed by the arrival of more Polish Jews from Germany, presumably by the operation of the agreement of January 24 last (see my telegrams No. 5² and 6 Saving² of January 25) by which the Jews already expelled were to return to liquidate their affairs and bring their families back to Poland. I understand from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that there have been difficulties about their bringing their property into Poland and that a clearing procedure is to be adopted. A semi-official 'Iskra' communiqué of February 28 announced that in virtue of the Polish-German agreement the deported persons would not only be allowed to return to Germany for a short time to settle their private affairs but would also be allowed to appoint plenipotentiaries to take charge of the administration and liquidation of their property. An 'Association of Polish Citizens owning Property in Germany' has recently been formed in Warsaw to protect the interests of all Polish citizens owning property in Germany.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

² Not printed.

No. 192

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 9, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 170 Telegraphic [C 2818/1321/55]

ROME, March 9, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

The Counsellor asked Count Ciano today whether anything of interest had taken place during the latter's visit to Warsaw. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that the visit was really nothing more than a gesture of 'returning M. Beck's visiting card'.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Italians and Poles were on good terms and as regards the question of a joint Hungarian-Polish frontier he had told M. Beck that he considered the question had been settled by Vienna arbitration and that Italy would do nothing further in the matter.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 193

Letter from Mr. Hudson to Viscount Halifax

[N 1389/57/38]

DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE, March 9, 1939

I enclose a record of a talk I had with Maisky in case it is of interest.

R. S. HUDSON

Secretary of State.

M. Maisky came to lunch with me to-day. I said that my forthcoming trip to Moscow was exploratory—could he give me an idea of the atmosphere I should find there? He said that his country felt that in recent years, and especially at Munich, we had shown that we were not to be relied on to resist Dictators; that as a result there was a growing belief in Russia in isolationism. They felt that they were very nearly self-supporting and militarily invulnerable.

As regards trade, although they had a considerable output of gold from their mines, they were determined to keep this as a war reserve and therefore could only buy abroad in proportion as they sold. They did not want consumption goods and if they could not buy the products that they wanted as re-exports from the United Kingdom, they would have to go to the countries which produced those raw materials and buy direct.

On the other hand, I should find that the Russian Government were anxious to maintain and improve their relations with the United Kingdom. I should find that his countrymen were hard bargainers but he saw no insuperable difficulties in the way of negotiating a wider agreement, although he frankly thought that the present temporary Agreement was working well and was not in need of amendment. I assured him that if he really thought this last to be the case, he must have sadly misjudged British public opinion in the last few months. He said that one of the ways of overcoming the difficulty the Russians were in, owing to lack of adequate foreign exchange, would be in additional credits. I said that if the Russians chose to raise this point it would have to be considered on its merits like anything else, but it was for them, not me, to raise it. M. Maisky was a little taken aback at this and hurriedly said that he hoped I was not under the impression that he, personally, had raised it.

As he was leaving, M. Maisky said that he was quite convinced that we, the British Empire, were unable to stand up against German aggression, even with the assistance of France, unless we had the collaboration and help of Russia. I said that I thought, on the contrary, there had been a great change of public opinion in the last few weeks in this country; that our armaments were rapidly increasing; and that the public, as a whole, were determined to stand up to German pretensions, naturally in association with France, and that we were confident of the final issue of any armed conflict—great though the losses and suffering would be. He insisted, however, on his point of view and I ventured to beg him, if Moscow shared that view, to disabuse their minds. I was quite sure in my own mind that our position was rapidly improving and, as far as the economic sphere was concerned, we were certainly in a much stronger position to-day than had been our negotiators during the Anglo-Soviet discussions of 1933.

It is, of course, difficult to say how far M. Maisky's remarks represent what he really has in mind or, indeed, whether he had any authority from his Government for holding such language.

The fact, however, that he went out of his way to raise these questions, and insisted on his point of view with such apparent emphasis, may be thought to indicate a certain nervousness in the minds of the Russian Government.

R. S. H.

No. 194

Minute by Mr. R. A. Butler

[N 1342/57/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 9, 1939

The Russian Ambassador lunched to-day, and I was rather impressed by his attitude, particularly as he stayed on for half-an-hour after my guests left, and I give a synopsis of what he said.

He had just had a talk with Mr. Hudson¹ and felt that all he had heard from him 'was too good to be true'. He was very suspicious of the British approaches to Russia at the present time. It was true that an attempt was being made to improve Anglo-Sovietic relations. He asked me most seriously after lunch whether this attempt was genuine. I replied that Mr. Hudson was going for the purpose of discussing trade matters, and that quite apart from this visit of course we wished to be friendly with Russia. He said that since Munich the Soviet Union had been hesitating before deciding on a policy of complete isolation. They were, however, ruled by their head and not by their heart, and they decided to wait and see how things developed. He could not believe that friendship with Russia formed part of the Prime Minister's policy of appeasement, which he greatly distrusted and regarded as being a desire to make friends with Germany and Italy at all costs. I replied that he had not correctly interpreted the policy and that appeasement could be practised with all nations, particularly if world trade, world economics and perhaps one day world disarmament could be achieved by so broad a policy.

He asked me in what manner the British public could be brought better to understand the Soviet Union. I said that if they knew more about the internal method of government and the country as a whole. He said he supposed the people had been shocked by the recent liquidation of undesirable elements in the army and elsewhere, who wished to make friends with Germany and Japan, and who wished to return to the capitalist system. Now, he said, the position had reverted to normal, and the Government was much more decentralised and less totalitarian than the British people imagined.

The Ambassador said we were far too optimistic in England and that he anticipated trouble in the Mediterranean. To sum up he appeared to me to be suspicious of His Majesty's Government for three reasons. First, because we were 'selling the Jews' in the Palestine Conference and illustrated our own fear of developments in the Mediterranean by wishing to make friends with

¹ See No. 193.

the Arabs at all costs. (On this point I tried to give him a better picture of what was in fact happening in the Palestine Conference.) In the second place he did not seem fully to understand the motives of the Prime Minister for being so kind to him at his recent reception, although he said he appreciated the Prime Minister's kindness to him personally. In the third place the Ambassador seemed to be suspicious of Mr. Hudson's visit to Moscow. It struck me that he thought that the reason why we were approaching them was that while the British people were optimistic the Government were anticipating trouble and were therefore seeking the help of Russia.

I may have done something to allay his suspicions, aided by Mr. W. S. Morrison,² who was present, as was Mr. Oliver Harvey,³ but his attitude both during and after lunch was so concerned and worried that I cannot help reporting the conversation which took place.

R. A. B.

² Minister of Agriculture.

³ Principal Private Secretary to Lord Halifax.

CHAPTER III

The German violation of the Munich Agreement and the destruction of Czech independence (March 9-17, 1939)

No. 195

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16)

No. 315 [C 3184/15/18]

BERLIN, March 9, 1939

My Lord,

The impression which I have of Germany to-day is that she stands at the cross-roads, and that this year may well prove decisive as to which tendency Nazism will for a while hereafter follow: namely, either to misuse her great strength for purposes of political domination and the satisfaction of restless and ever-increasing ambitions; or to abandon jungle law in its cruder forms and gradually to return to normalcy and international co-operation.

2. The rational point of view would be that Hitler, after his great but exhausting successes of last year, should be yearning for a period of more tranquil existence, during which he would be able to consolidate German unity, to restore financial and economic prosperity to his country, and to give full scope to his artistic and constructive plans for the development and beautification of the Greater Germany which he has created. Such a point of view is, of course, mere common sense, and as such unfortunately no real guide to German actions, particularly since in the Germany of to-day it is a single unpredictable individual who alone decides on policy, and who, to a great extent, is the slave of his past. Yet in my judgment of Hitler's psychology, I believe that the above, if realisable, would be his preference. However absolute a ruler, he must (as Field-Marshal Göring has hinted to me) still take account of the wishes of his people, if he himself and his own régime are to survive. And the German people as a whole are longing for peace. Hitler himself fought in the World War and his dislike of bloodshed, or anyway of dead Germans, is intense. His personal tastes are artistic and he has the artist's desire to satisfy them. Even if he does dream of unlimited expansion he cannot but be influenced by the reflection that a further advance is dangerous before the consolidation of his latest gains. He added 10 million Germans to the Third Reich in 1938, and their assimilation requires a period of digestive calm. And so on and so forth. On every reasonable ground Hitler should be sincere when he says that he is looking forward to a long period of peace.

3. On the other hand, can even Hitler himself check the momentum of the National Socialist revolution? The Germans are notorious for their lack not only of balance but also of any understanding of the mentality and reactions of those with whom they have to deal: their recent successes have been so great that they feel that nothing and nobody can stop them anywhere; after the post-war humiliation their desire to prove their recuperated strength and importance to the world is a consuming one; they do not regard anyone in continental Europe as capable of standing up to their bullying, and they may well, therefore, see nothing but advantage for themselves in the continued application of jungle law. Their post-war experiences have unfortunately taught them that change is only possible by means of force or the display of force, and in this state of mind compromise and concession are only regarded as a sign of weakness.

4. No doubt there are a considerable number of the younger Nazis and of the more extreme elements of the party to whom the latter course seems the more attractive and profitable. Though I do not believe that they constitute momentarily anything more than a small minority of what Field-Marshal Göring described to me as fools, it is true that a fanatical minority can at times exercise an influence quite disproportionate to its actual numbers. Nevertheless, as a demagogue, Hitler's natural inclination would be to wish to please the majority rather than the minority of his people. That is one reason why, since I can find no justification for the theory that he is mad or even verging on madness, I am of opinion that he is not thinking to-day in terms of war, and that one of his pre-occupations is lest the actions of the Western democracies, by means of what he regards as excessive interference in Germany's special sphere of interest, will be such as to throw him into the arms of that minority and to justify its contention that force and force only can ensure to Germany her legitimate rights and her due place under the sun.

5. British policy towards Germany must presumably depend on which of the two above courses, international co-operation or jungle law, she is likely to follow in the immediate future. But at the same time the converse may equally be the case, namely, that Germany's future course may to a great extent depend on the policy which His Majesty's Government will adopt towards her at this critical moment. In that respect perhaps Britain also to-day stands at the cross-roads.

6. It goes without saying that so long as there is reason to hold the view that Germany is irrevocably bent on further adventure and that the use of her immensely powerful military organisation is intended primarily for aggressive purposes and the forcible domination of her neighbours, then the less we have anything to do with her and the faster we get on with our own defensive armaments the better it will be.

7. The above represents, however, a policy of despair, and as such the consideration of an alternative policy seems essential. Within limits to which I shall later refer, I am, moreover, personally not inclined to take the extreme pessimistic view, which appears to me to be as dangerous as over-optimism. Without failing to realise and to be prepared for the worst, it is at least pre-

ferable, and probably more useful, to hope for the best. It may be fated that we shall have to fight Germany again. I would be the last to deny that possibility, even though I do not regard it as inevitable. But the real danger point is most likely to be reached only after a number of years; that is to say not before the new Germany has become finally consolidated and infinitely stronger than she is to-day; not until her economic and financial position has been fully re-established and world opinion has become less hostile to her than it at present is; and not until the new generation, which did not know the last war, has itself assumed power in this country. In other words, the history of Frederick William I of Prussia and Frederick the Great may repeat itself, with Herr Hitler in the role of the former. I do not shut my eyes to the possibility that the role of the latter may appeal yet more to him, particularly in view of the fact that militarily Germany is at the moment relatively stronger *vis-à-vis* France and Britain, than she is likely to be for some years. That seems to me, however, but small compensation, from her own point of view, for the immense disadvantages of her present unsound economic and financial position, of a world united against dictators and Jew-baiters, and of a German people longing for peace and worn out with all the high tension of the past six years. There is a supreme factor to be taken into account and that is the limit of human endurance. After six years of strenuous nazification the German people has no great reserve of endurance behind it. In fact, if a preventive war were a practical solution, this year or next might be the most opportune moment for it, particularly if it were a war of German making. I believe that many Germans fear it for this reason.

8. Be the above view correct or otherwise, the problem, though regarded from another angle, still remains as to what British policy towards Germany should be. Is Britain to help Germany to return to normalcy [*sic*], to overcome her economic and financial difficulties, to facilitate her commercial rivalry with ourselves and to become, in a word, still more powerful, and consequently more dangerous, than she is to-day; or is Britain to stand aside, to allow Germany to stew in the juice of her own making, and to leave her to solve her difficulties as best she can?

9. If there were any apparent constructive value in the policy of standing aloof and keeping Germany lean, one might be prepared to recommend it. It is, however, difficult to see any practical advantage in it, even if we could—which we probably cannot—keep one of our best customers permanently lean. Even the idea that, as the result of our treating Hitler as a pariah, the German people will overturn him and his régime has, in my opinion, no more solid foundation than the wish that it might be so. On the other hand, the denial of all help and the refusal of all sympathetic understanding is calculated to produce a feeling of despair which, even if it does not actually bring about the explosion which we fear, will at least leave behind it a heritage of hatred and a desire for revenge. Moreover, taking the long view, Europe will never be stable and peaceful until Germany is once more prosperous, and even her prosperity, in spite of her economic competition, is likely to benefit us materially in the end no less than Germany herself,

particularly if she reverts to freedom of exchange and commerce. In spite of the risks involved, would not, therefore, the wiser course for His Majesty's Government be to consider how far they possibly can go to help Germany?—and better now when help might be appreciated than later.

10. I am not blind to the fact that we cannot appreciably help Germany without considerable expense to ourselves, yet even so that expense will be cheaper than a perpetuation of the armaments race, if the latter can thereby be avoided. I have little faith in the gratitude of nations, though I believe that Hitler is personally not lacking in that rare quality. Nor am I oblivious of the fact that co-operation with Nazism will be unpopular with certain sections of British opinion. Moreover, I realise that such co-operation, quite apart from expense, means acquiescing to a certain extent in Germany's aims in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Admittedly, the objections to giving that considerable measure of assistance which can alone effectively remedy the difficulties in which Germany now finds herself have great political, technical and moral weight. Nevertheless, on balance and since the alternative would probably be worse, I believe that, provided always Germany shows any real inclination to meet us half-way, we would be well advised resolutely to face these risks.

11. What, then, are Hitler's objectives, and is any understanding which he signs worth the paper on which it is written? Those, briefly put, are the issues which have to be weighed in the balance.

12. Two years ago my predecessor summed up Hitler's immediate (and from a German point of view comprehensible) objectives under three headings as follows:—

- (1) Absorption of Austria and other Germanic peoples (*e.g.*, the German fringe of Czecho-Slovakia).
- (2) Expansion in the east.
- (3) Recovery of colonies.

13. Hitler largely achieved the objectives under the first heading last year and probably sooner than even he anticipated. It seems inevitable that in the course of time Memel and Danzig, and even, possibly, some other minor fringes will be re-attached on the basis of self-determination to the Reich. The most that we can hope for is that this will happen without sabre-rattling and by means of constitutional forms or peaceful negotiation. The question of colonies is one which requires careful preparation and a far better atmosphere than is likely to be obtained during the present year. The less, therefore, said about them for the moment, the better.

14. There remains the heading of expansion in the east, and the principal immediate question therefore is what are Hitler's ulterior, legitimate or illegitimate, objectives in that direction? 'L'appétit vient en mangeant,' but the correct answer will probably be somewhere between the fears of the pessimists and the hopes of the optimists. Germany is a mighty big country, and 80 million industrious and disciplined Germans will always be a troublesome factor in European politics and economics. For that, at least, we must

be fully prepared. Since human actions are at the mercy of chance occurrences, the rest is largely hypothetical. Nevertheless, I feel constrained to observe here that most of the talk about German advances into Holland and Switzerland, the Ukraine and Roumania must be regarded as, to say the least, very premature. It must not be forgotten that a principle of Nazism in its present form is purity of race. Austria and the Sudeten lands, where all were pure Germans, and where, even in the former case, the majority of the inhabitants were, in principle, in favour of Greater Germany, is one thing, and countries in which such a majority is non-existent quite another. One is too apt to believe that, because the one happened, the other must equally be contemplated. There are extremists in every country, and while it is inevitable that in the first fine frenzy of German unity there should be talk here of Switzerland and Holland, I hold any aggression in respect of them in present circumstances as too hypothetical for more than passing consideration. So far as Roumania is concerned, it is understandable that Germany should wish to assure to herself a preponderating share of the products of the Roumanian oilfields. It seems hardly possible for us to take exception to this so long as any arrangements which she may make to this end are freely negotiated with the Government of that country. As regards the Ukraine, while I regard the idea of conquest as inconceivable, it seems to me inevitable that Germany should wish to endeavour to detach that rich country from the vast Russian State, which she regards as her ultimate enemy. She would in her own interests naturally prefer the Ukraine to be independent and to constitute a buffer State between her and that enemy, and it is obvious that she would like to exercise a predominating economic and political influence therein. I cannot see the U.S.S.R. meekly submitting to German intrigues to such an end, and it seems to me that the less we take sides in such a conflict the better.

15. In my opinion, where we have failed since the war is in our inability or unwillingness to take account of the reality of Germany. However unpalatable to us and inconvenient for the rest of Europe, it was no ignoble desire on Hitler's part to seek to incorporate Germans—be they Austrians or Sudetens—in Greater Germany. We were rightly horrified at the form in which the two incorporations took place, but in themselves they were but the consummation of a longing which had been present in the mind of all German thinkers for centuries.

16. Another point which we fail to realise is that beneath all the bumpiness of the Nazi régime there still lies an inferiority complex and a deeply rooted nervous uncertainty. We cannot appreciate what Germany suffered as the result of the blockade in the war and of the terms of the Versailles Treaty. More than anything else to-day is the apprehension of a recurrence of these sufferings present in all German minds and the policy of Hitler is largely affected thereby.

17. Hitler made it very clear in 'Mein Kampf' that 'Lebensraum' for Germany could only be found in expansion eastwards, and expansion eastwards renders a clash between Germany and Russia some day or other highly

probable. With a benevolent Britain on her flank, Germany can envisage such an eventuality with comparative equanimity. But she lives in dread of the reverse and of the war on two fronts which was equally Bismarck's nightmare. The best approach to good relations with Germany is therefore along the lines of the avoidance of constant and vexatious interference in matters in which British interests are not directly or vitally involved and the prospect of British neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in the east. I say 'along the lines of,' since it is self-evident that we cannot blindly give Germany *carte blanche* in the east. It is not out of the question, however, that an agreement with Hitler could be reached, provided it be limited to provisions by which Hitler may reasonably be expected to abide.

18. It seems suitable to consider here the question as to whether we can count on Hitler's word, if he gave it. Personally, I would not go further than to say that, as an individual, he would be as likely to keep it as any other foreign statesman—under certain conditions probably more so. Strange though it may sound, he prides himself on keeping his word. One might quote numerous instances of his having broken it, the Concordat, &c. He himself would argue that in those instances it was the action of others which drove him to do so. His justification—of which he is himself convinced—would be that the others broke faith first. That is as it may be, but it is a fact that he pushes personal loyalty—where his own friends are concerned—to excess. Much of the internal dislike of the Nazi Government is due to the prominent positions held by the swashbuckling and second-rate adherents of Hitler in his early struggles for power. He cannot bring himself to get rid of those who bore the brunt of the street fighting in the hour of uncertainty. If he listens to anyone to-day and is influenced by the views of others, it is the inner circle of the Brown House at Munich which carries most weight with him. Difficult though German relations with Poland sometimes are, I shall be surprised if he goes back on the ten years' agreement which he made with Pilsudski, who was clever enough to be the first to appreciate the strength of the Nazi movement and to hold out a friendly hand to it. I shall be equally surprised if, so long as he lives and Mussolini does not definitely leave the Axis, he goes back on his guarantee as regards the Southern Tyrol.

19. What the above amounts to in fact is that, while in any case it would be unwise today to expect any nation to keep its word when that word is contrary to its true interests, Hitler would probably honour his signature with Britain—so long as Britain remained even comparatively friendly disposed to Germany. Thus, since no agreement is worth while unless there is concurrence of views in this respect, one comes back to the question as to what His Majesty's Government and Hitler would be prepared to agree to regard as Germany's legitimate interests.

20. Briefly I would sum up Germany's immediate objectives (i.e., within the next year or two) as follows: Memel, Danzig and colonies, and the complete subordination of Czecho-Slovakia politically and economically to Germany. We may dislike the latter, but geographically speaking it is inevitable.

21. Further than this I would not like to go, beyond drawing a distinction between the illegitimate aim of political domination and the legitimate one of trade development. Where one begins and the other ends is the difficulty. Hitler regards himself as the chosen leader destined to lead Germany to the greater space ('Lebensraum') under the sun to which he, in common with all Germans, regard her as entitled. That certainty means economic and political predominance in Central and Eastern Europe. Potentially Germany possesses such predominance already and a certain degree of recognition of that fact is essential if we desire an understanding with her. If the effect of our policy after 1938 is to hem Germany in economically, as she was territorially after 1918, we must face the prospect of a perpetuation of the arms race with the probability of disappointment at the end of it. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that if Germany's pretensions prove exaggerated, the disease carries with it its own remedy. The pursuit of 'world dominion' or even the hegemony of Central and Eastern Europe means world hostility or at least the enmity of every neighbouring European country; and no State, however powerful, could in the end prevail against such a combination.

22. I confess that it always seems to me misleading lightly to talk of Germany as seeking 'world dominion'. Presumably this comprehensive word means predominance not only in Europe but in Africa, Asia and America as well. Some Germans may well have such wild fancies, but I believe Hitler to be still far too sane to cherish such a chimera. Up to the Napoleonic era the master of Europe might aspire to be master of the world. But that conception in the 20th century is a thing of the past. It has been made impossible by the growth of the power of the United States of America and Japan, which have been allowed to develop unhindered behind the shelter of the British fleet.

23. That is why, as I said above, I would place Germany's objectives as somewhere between the exaggerated fears of the pessimists and the equally exaggerated delusions of the optimists. It is, in my opinion, as futile in considering British policy to be guided by the idea of a Germany seeking world dominion as it would be imprudent to foretell the limits which Hitler or Germany's subsequent rulers may set to the place under the sun which they fondly believe to be Germany's due. All depends on circumstances and opportunity, on the development of events, on the resistance which Germany will encounter and, in Hitler's case, possibly on his voice, i.e., the inspiration by which he believes himself to be guided from above. And admittedly, 'Lebensraum' is a sufficiently vague phrase to be capable of almost any interpretation. Some solution of the colonial question is indispensable ultimately if Great Britain and Germany are to live amicably side by side. But otherwise Germany's continental future lies eastward and it is probably not unfortunate that it should be so. The 'Drang nach Osten' is a reality, but the 'Drang nach Westen' will only become so if Germany finds all the avenues to the east blocked or if western opposition is such as to convince Hitler that he cannot go eastward without first having rendered it innocuous.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

P.S.—The above despatch was written before the present crisis in Czechoslovakia became acute and is consequently to that extent academical for the moment.

N. H.

No. 196

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 10, 9.15 p.m.)

No. 43 Telegraphic [C 2931/92/55]

WARSAW, March 10, 1939, 7.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 41.¹

M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet informed Counsellor today that M. Beck had been surprised to receive Your Lordship's message. He would like to know what subjects Your Lordship wished to discuss since if severe limits were to be imposed he wondered whether the visit was opportune at present time.

2. Counsellor said he did not think Your Lordship wished to impose limits as in any case conversations were to embrace *tour d'horizon*. But colonial campaign in full swing here was unfortunate and Your Lordship noticing 'colonies' amongst the subjects suggested by M. Beck doubtless wished to avoid any misunderstanding. It would, for instance, be most unfortunate if it got out into the press that colonial problem was to be discussed in London.

3. M. Lubieski said rather disingenuously that colonial campaign was embarrassing to Polish Government though he supposed it was better than any anti-Jewish campaign. M. Beck had never intended to make any colonial demands or to identify himself with the have-nots. But he did wish to explain to His Majesty's Government Poland's attitude on raw material and emigration questions. He did not wish to take up any attitude even in his own Cabinet on these questions until he had discussed them with His Majesty's Government.

I venture to think that Your Lordship's message was justified and useful since the Polish Government support of colonial campaign is liable to mislead general public here. I would suggest that I be authorized to inform M. Beck that Your Lordship does not wish unduly to restrict subjects of conversation and agrees to *tour d'horizon*, Jews and Danzig.

5. If M. Beck chooses to mention raw materials and emigration he may do so. But that Your Lordship noticing colonies amongst topics definitely suggested by M. Beck had felt it necessary to give friendly warning since there is all the difference between the problem of raw materials and what is popularly understood by colonial question. In this connexion see my despatch No. 49 E.¹ which left by bag March 8.

¹ Not printed.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 10, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 84 Telegraphic [C 2914/7/12]

BERLIN, March 10, 1939, 8.36 p.m.

Vice-Consul at Dresden telegraphed me that he was informed at Leipzig that responsible circles there regard it as definite that Slovak claims against the Czechs will be encouraged to the point of civil disturbance whereupon Germany will send troops to restore order.

My Military Attaché informs me that his Czech colleague similarly fears some sort of trouble between Czechs and Slovaks such as will give Germans an excuse for forcible interference and complains that Vienna radio is being very active in incitement of Slovaks.

As you are aware from every kind of source, official and otherwise, there is much talk both truculent and nervous throughout Germany of fresh adventures. Some of this is inspired by desires of those who seek them but mostly by apprehensions of those who only longing for peace fear them. In the first case appetites have been whetted by successes of 1938: in the latter people are terrified lest a Government which brought them last year to the brink of war should drag them over it this year.

Similarly in the case of military preparations in general, or mobilization plans in particular, there is the conception on the one hand that these are being organised for offensive and on the other to meet the aggression which it is believed that Western Powers contemplate when once their own re-armaments are completed.

If Herr Hitler seeks adventure the most obvious form which it would be likely to take would be some *coup* in Czecho-Slovakia. It must be borne in mind that he was disappointed in this respect last year. Moreover Germany is so situated that it is possible for her to foment almost any intrigue there with success. I have been so far unable to ascertain whether Germany wants a united Czecho-Slovakia within German political and economic orbit or a disrupted State. The Czecho-Slovak Minister with whom I spoke yesterday is inclined to believe the former to be the case though so far actions of the German Government would seem to indicate the latter.

The present constitutional crisis in Czecho-Slovakia tends to render this matter one of actuality with Germany possibly fishing in troubled waters though with what exact ultimate objective I cannot say.¹

Repeated to Prague.

¹ Sir O. Sargent minuted on this telegram on March 16: 'Sir N. Henderson here for the first time recognises the possibility that Herr Hitler may seek adventure and, if so, the most obvious form it would be likely to take would be some *coup* in Czecho-Slovakia. I cannot refrain from contrasting this very accurate forecast with the one he gave in his telegram No. 64 [No. 118] as recently as the 18th February, when he said: "My definite impression since my return here is that Herr Hitler does not contemplate any adventures at the moment and that all stories and rumours to the contrary are completely without real foundation. . . .

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11)

No. 53 Telegraphic [C 2912/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 10, 1939¹

An official communiqué published in this afternoon's press announces that the President of the Republic has dismissed from office the following members of the Slovak Government: Dr. Tiso, Dr. Durcansky, Dr. Pruzinsky and Dr. Vanco, and that M. Josef Sivak, deputy chairman of the party of Slovak Unity and Minister of Schools, has been appointed head of the Slovak Government and Minister of Schools, Interior, Transport, Public Works, Industry, Trade, Agriculture and Justice. M. Teplansky remains Minister of Finance.

The Czecho-Slovak wireless broadcast a statement early this morning explaining these changes on the grounds that certain factors in the Slovak Government had not been showing sufficient resistance to subversive activities and that the federal interests of the State were thereby threatened. The changes would not affect the Central Government where the Slovak Minister, [M.] Sidor, would remain Deputy President of the Council. The President of the Republic would continue negotiations for the completion of these changes in the Slovak Government and the Chairman of the Slovak Diet, Dr. Sokol, would come to Prague today for this purpose. The government's re-organisation had been very urgent and had to be settled as quickly as possible in the interests of Slovakia and of the whole State. Slovak autonomy would remain completely intact and the Sillein agreement² which gave the Slovaks everything laid down in the Pittsburgh Agreement³ remained in force. The Pittsburgh Agreement and the Slovak autonomy law had a common basis in that both emphasised the principle of the indivisibility of the Republic. 'It is for this principle that we are fighting and every true son of the Slovak nation and of the Czech nation will do all in his power to strengthen the idea of the solidarity of the federal portions of the Republic'.

In a subsequent broadcast addressed to the Slovak population the aim was

¹ The times of despatch and receipt of this telegram are not recorded.

² i.e. the agreement between the Czech Government and the congress of the Slovak Front meeting at Zilina, on October 6, 1938. See Volume III of this Series, No. 147.

³ i.e. the convention between Dr. T. G. Masaryk and representatives of the Slovaks in the U.S.A. in 1918.

These may sound strange opinions in the light of all rumours current during the past few months, but I take full responsibility for making them mine. I regard and always have regarded it as a bad mistake to attribute excessive importance to stories spread generally with intention either by those who regard war as the only weapon with which the Nazi régime can be overthrown or by those Nazis themselves who desire war for their own satisfaction or aggrandisement." This misleading forecast was particularly unfortunate if, as I suppose, it was one of the factors which decided the Prime Minister to issue to the press last week the *mot d'ordre* to the effect that the international position could now be viewed with confidence and optimism.' See also Appendix I documents (iii), (iv), and (vii).

declared of maintaining Slovak freedom only in the common Czecho-Slovak Republic. That was the purpose of the Four Great Powers which had laid the new foundations of the Republic at Munich and Vienna. Any attempt to detach Slovakia from the Bohemian provinces was treachery to the people and contrary to the will of the Great Powers. Only a base adventurer could say that it was the desire of Germany. It was added that the new Slovak Government would obtain large financial assistance in the Bohemian provinces and would in no way touch the national rights of the other races in the country.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest and Bucharest.

No. 199

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11)¹

No. 54 Telegraphic [C 2908/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 10, 1939

My telegram No. 53.²

His Majesty's Consulate at Bratislava telephoned at 4.0 p.m. that town was reasonably quiet though there had been demonstrations this morning by unarmed members of Hlinka Guard proclaiming their loyalty to Sidor, Tiso and Mach. The situation seemed well under control.

¹ The times of despatch and receipt of this telegram are not recorded.

² No. 198.

No. 200

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [C 2917/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 10, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 51¹ and 53.²

Minister for Foreign Affairs has given me following account of Slovak crisis.

For some time past under leadership of Durcansky and Pruzinsky there had been persistent propaganda for complete independence of Slovakia under, so far as might be necessary, German protection. Minister for Foreign Affairs said he had no reason to believe that this propaganda was inspired from the Reich or by German minority and it was presumably unwelcome either to Poland or to Hungary (although I forebore to say so, this last sentence seems inconsistent with his remark on March 8 that difficulties with Slovaks had been fomented by external propaganda³). His Excellency went on to say that propaganda might soon have led to serious trouble so that when Slovak Government recently made proposals involving financial assistance from Prague and also the appointment of a number of Slovak

¹ No. 188.

² No. 198.

³ See No. 188.

officers to serve only in Slovakia the Central Government replied that separatist propaganda must cease. Dr. Tiso, the Prime Minister, was not in favour of an independent Slovakia but nevertheless had reserved his decision and did not attend the discussions yesterday at which M. Sidor, the Slovak representative in Central Government, stated that Dr. Tiso's Government was too weak to take the necessary action. The President of the Republic thereupon dissolved the Slovak Government and entrusted M. Sivak and M. Teplansky with the administration pending a new Government. Meanwhile the President of Slovak Parliament, M. Sokol, was responsible under the constitution for submission to President of a new Government and was now in communication with Prague for that purpose. A final decision might, however, await meeting of Slovak Parliament due on March 14. Minister for Foreign Affairs complained [*sic* ? explained] that everything was being done in accordance with constitution. Slovakia was quite tranquil and no serious trouble was being made by Hlinka guards whose head, M. Sidor, was in Prague. The army could keep order, if necessary, and various leaders including M. Tuka were under detention. Minister for Foreign Affairs thought M. Sidor might be awaiting developments before deciding about his own position.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that the Governments of the neighbouring States had already been informed of what had occurred and had shown no particular reactions so far. I suspect, however, that he is somewhat uneasy as would indeed be only natural as to the intentions of Germany. German Government, he observed, had referred to consolidation of the country and effective steps to this end were now being taken. If the question remained an internal one it would be solved without difficulty but if Germany insisted on any particular solution the Government at Prague would of course have no option but to agree.

Repeated to Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest and Warsaw.

No. 201

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13)

No. 306 [C 2951/19/18]

PARIS, March 10, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum of March 10 from the Military Attaché, recording a conversation with General Dentz regarding German pressure on Czecho-Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 201

PARIS, March 10, 1939

No. 292
The Ambassador

I met General Dentz at dinner last night and he told me that the Germans were exercising an increasingly rigorous pressure on the Czechs. As an

example, he quoted the case of the late Head of the *Deuxième Bureau* in Prague who had been removed from the Army and sent into exile, and at the present moment both he and his family were living at The Hague. General Dentz was occupying himself to try and arrange for him to be given a French commission in the Foreign Legion without loss of rank. He went on to say that he was wondering whether Hitler's success for 1939 was not to be the final disarmament and destruction of Czecho-Slovakia as an independent Power. He pointed out that so far the Germans had consistently refused to guarantee the Czecho-Slovakian frontiers, although this was part and parcel of the Munich Agreement, and he thought it was quite possible that the end of this year might see the reduction of the country to the status of a German protectorate.

W. FRASER,
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 202

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 11, 12.15 p.m.)

No. 86 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2926/7/12]

BERLIN, March 11, 1939

My telegram No. 85.¹

The front pages of this morning's press are almost entirely devoted to accounts of the controversy between the Czechs and Slovaks. Comment so far is reserved, but points out that the reasons for the controversy are to be found in Prague's failure to bring about a sound and peaceful settlement, in accordance with the principles of Munich and the Vienna awards, between the autonomy claims of the Slovaks and the interests of the Czecho-Slovak State as a whole.

Headlines in the '*Völkischer Beobachter*' go a little further. They say: 'Return to the old Czech methods', 'Prague is terrorising Slovakia', 'Violation of the Czech Constitution'. Prominence is given to a report from Pressburg to the effect that the 'last [*sic*]² of the German party' at Kásmark has been occupied by Czech troops and all papers refer in special paragraphs to the confirmation given to the '*Deutsches Nachrichten Büro*' that the Slovaks have addressed a note to the German Government (see my telegram No. 85).

Herr Halfeld in the evening edition of the '*Hamburger Fremdenblatt*' of March 10 writes that the theatre of European unrest has been transferred from Spain to Czecho-Slovakia and that the root of the trouble is to be found in the fact that the peacemakers of Versailles allowed four different national groups (before the Vienna award, six) to be surrendered to the mercy of one group, the Czechs.

¹ No. 203. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

² This word appears to be an error in transmission for 'office' ('*Dienststelle*').

No. 203

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 1.0 p.m.)

No. 85 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2925/7/12]

BERLIN, March 11, 1939

Press announces this morning that Slovak Government of Tiso has appealed to German Government.

Press itself while strongly pro-Slovak and containing ominous references to interference with German institutions and individuals gives the impression of waiting for a lead.

Unpleasant fact to be faced is that no solution of Czech problem will be worth anything unless it has German approval and in the interests of Czech themselves best course will therefore be to leave the initiative to the German Government. It is the Italian Government in view of the Vienna accord [*sic* ? award] who are primarily interested and I propose to leave it to my Italian colleague officially to seek enlightenment as to German views which he agrees with me is the wisest course to adopt in this delicate situation.

If Germany decides that forcible intervention is required most probable action on her part would be to occupy line of demarcation between Bohemia and Slovakia and then call upon the two Governments to submit to her arbitration. If Czechs wish to avoid this their wisest course would be either to seek such arbitration in advance of any such move or to withdraw their own troops from Slovakia.

But I doubt whether Herr Hitler has yet taken any decision and I consider it therefore highly desirable that nothing should be said or published abroad during the weekend which will excite him to precipitate action.

French Ambassador is absent in Paris but my Italian colleague concurs in above views.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 204

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 3.15 p.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic [C 2937/281/17]

PARIS, March 11, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

My despatch No. 258.¹

French Government's reply received today states that they are in agreement with proposals of His Majesty's Government and they suggest conversations may begin in London about March 15. French Government will be represented by General Lelong, representing Chief of General Staff of National Defence, who will be assisted by Colonel Ayme of Secretariat-General of Superior Council of National Defence; Major Noiret of General Staff of the army; Rear-Admiral Bourragué, assistant to Chief of Naval Staff, and Commandant Bailly of Air Staff. Colonel Ayme will represent Ministry of Colonies.²

¹ No. 153.

² For the full text of this reply see No. 213.

No. 205

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 3.15 p.m.)

No. 96 Telegraphic [C 2929/92/55]

PARIS, March 11, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 87.¹

French Government state that, in view of Swedish Government's concurrence conveyed to them by His Majesty's Government, they agree to return of High Commissioner to Danzig. French Government have informed the League Secretariat direct.

Copy of French note follows by bag.²

Repeated to Stockholm, Berlin, Warsaw and Danzig.

¹ No. 168.

² Not printed.

No. 206

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 57 Telegraphic [C 2918/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939, 1.55 p.m.

In official circles it is stated that, contrary to allegations in last night's German wireless, calm reigns throughout the country.

Repeated to Berlin and Budapest.

No. 207

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 11, 3.15 p.m.)*

No. 44 Telegraphic [C 2932/7/12]

WARSAW, March 11, 1939, 2.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 24 Saving.¹

1. Polish attitude to events in Czecho-Slovakia seems to be one of rather anxious passivity. Official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave as his personal view today that Poland could regard with benevolence any of the three following solutions:—

1. An autonomous Slovakia united to Bohemia . . .² Pittsburgh Agreement.
2. Union of Slovakia with Hungary.
3. A truly independent Slovakia.

2. What Poland would dislike would be a Slovakia nominally independent but in fact dominated by Germany. But it was towards the last that things had been drifting and apparently Prague had woken up to this fact and had now taken decisive measures. He considered it doubtful if Germany would tolerate them. Poland had, he alleged, never desired to see Czecho-Slovakia

¹ No. 186.

² The text is here uncertain.

broken up, but only that Prague should treat the Slovaks generously and successfully overcome the present situation. M. Sidor had presumably the same aims.

3. As regards Ruthenia it seemed more and more clear that the only hope of a satisfactory solution was its incorporation in Hungary.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague and Budapest.

No. 208

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 58 Telegraphic [C 2919/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939, 8.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 55.¹

In a Slovak broadcast from Vienna last night Dr. Durcansky, one of the deposed Slovak Ministers, urged Slovak population and Hlinka Guards in particular to put up resistance against the Czechs. The Czechs, he said, had no right to interfere with Slovak affairs and in deposing the lawful representatives of Slovak nation they had violated the Constitution. The Czechs wished to exploit Slovakia and her people for their own ends. He, Durcansky, as lawful representative of the Slovak people and one of the Commanders of the Hlinka Guard ordered the latter to maintain strict order in Slovakia and to resist any Czech encroachments. Slovakia would fight for her rights and in this fight she could reckon with the support of Slovakia's great friend, that is Germany.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 200.

No. 209

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 59 Telegraphic [C 2920/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939, 8.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 55.¹

It is reported in this morning's press that owing to the absence of M. Sivak in Rome for the Papal Coronation M. Teplansky has taken temporary charge of the Slovak Government. He, M. Sidor, and M. Sokol returned to Bratislava yesterday. At 12.30 p.m. M. Teplansky broadcast an appeal for order adding that detachments of military, gendarmerie and police had been temporarily attached to the normal security organisations.

At midnight M. Sidor stated on the wireless that the political situation would be cleared up and a new Government constitutionally appointed within the next few hours. He appealed for calm and discipline and as Commander of the Hlinka Guard called upon them to obey the authority to which they had given their oaths.

Repeated to Berlin and Budapest.

¹ No. 200.

No. 210

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 61 Telegraphic [C 2921/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939, 8.35 p.m.

From telegrams despatched last night from British Consul at Bratislava, it appears that while thanks to military reinforcements situation is for the time being in hand (provided that Germans abstain from interfering), on the other hand the outlook for longer period is uncertain owing to anti-Czech feeling which has already rendered new régime unpopular.

Many demonstrations took place yesterday in Bratislava and German Party showed their sympathy with Slovak Extremists.

Tuka and Mach are both in Bohemia under arrest. Murgas is reported to have fled abroad.

No. 211

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 11.0 a.m.)

No. 62 Telegraphic [C 2922/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939, 8.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 61.¹

British Consul at Bratislava reports today that conditions now seem almost normal. Only minor incidents occurred last night and street demonstrations by Hlinka Guard today have been unimportant. The military have been removed from public buildings. Mr. Pares thinks that Sidor's open support of new Government (my telegram No. 59²) may indicate that it has greater chances of popularity.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 210.

² No. 209.

No. 212

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14)

No. 51 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3037/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 11, 1939

On my return from leave eleven days ago and before the Slovak crisis came to a head I was disappointed to find that nervous feelings which had seemed to be settling down towards the end of January were again rising. While they must have been based on intuition rather than on definite facts the cumulative evidence of reports from abroad at the time go some way towards justifying them. The following items would seem to be significant in this respect.

1. When discussing the question of guarantee with the Prime Minister in

January¹ Signor Mussolini put forward three new points not mentioned in the Munich Agreement which he thought must be settled before a guarantee could be considered. More than once in 1938 the German intentions towards Austria and Czecho-Slovakia were first revealed by Italian sources and it will have been noted that Count Ciano agreed with M. Beck last week that one must be prepared for a possible further disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia (Warsaw Saving telegram No. 22²).

2. The German Note of February 28³ suggests that the German Government wish to keep their hands free for further modifications of the status of this country and in particular to prevent the western Powers from committing themselves further to its protection. The conditions for a guarantee then put forward in the German Note in no way correspond to those mentioned to the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit to Berlin in January (my telegram No. 51⁴).

3. There is an ominous note in two articles reported in Berlin Saving telegram No. 95.⁵ The same may be said of last night's German wireless with its allegations of unrest in *Bohemia* and of today's 'Die Zeit' which says that *coup* in Slovakia is the work of the General Staff and far from popular in Prague. (The press of the German minority in Prague on the other hand is far more guarded).

4. The leaders of the German minority in Slovakia appear to be making common cause with the Slovak extremists.

5. The Slovak broadcasts from Vienna have long been inciting Slovakia against the Czechs and are now inciting them to insurrection. It is particularly significant that M. Durcansky was broadcasting from Vienna last night.

6. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's report of his conversation with Prince Max Hohenlohe (your despatch No. 125⁶) may be significant of the lines on which Herr Hitler's mind is working with regard to this country.

7. Since last September the German Legation at Prague has been in charge of a Chargé d'Affaires and no suggestion has yet been made so far as I am aware of the appointment of a new Minister.

8. There are rumours of troops being called up in Hungary (Budapest saving telegram No. 12⁷).

9. The Roumanians have renounced their opposition to a common Polish-Hungarian frontier (Warsaw telegram No. 40⁸).

In spite of the above recapitulation there is still no conclusive evidence here of a German intention to disrupt the State and the view held in certain

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 500, section (3).

² No. 177.

³ Enclosure in No. 171.

⁴ No. 188.

⁵ Not printed.

⁶ Not printed. In this conversation Prince Max of Hohenlohe, who had recently seen Herr Hitler, said that he had 'little doubt that Hitler intends to deal further with the two "historic Lands" (i.e. Bohemia and Moravia) so that he can get the whole industry of Central Europe under German control'.

⁷ Not printed.

⁸ No. 178.

quarters including the French Legation is that the policy of the Reich does not as yet extend beyond the intention of keeping Czecho-Slovakia weak. An independent Slovakia under German protection might after all be more of a liability than an asset and the policy of Vienna may be only tolerated but not espoused by Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 213

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13)

No. 308 [C 2954/281/17]

PARIS, March 11, 1939

His Majesty's Representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit the reply received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to H.M. Ambassador's *aide-mémoire* of February 25¹ regarding Anglo-French Staff conversations.

¹ Not printed. See No. 153.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 213

PARIS, le 10 mars, 1939

Par son aide-mémoire du 25 février 1939, l'Ambassade d'Angleterre a bien voulu exposer les conditions dans lesquelles le Gouvernement britannique proposait d'engager les conversations entre les États-Majors français et britannique.

Le Gouvernement de la République a l'honneur de faire savoir à l'Ambassade d'Angleterre qu'il est d'accord avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique sur les suggestions dont celui-ci l'a saisi.

Il ajoute que prendront part, du côté français, aux entretiens qui se poursuivront à Londres et dont la date initiale pourrait être fixée aux environs du 15 Mars:

Le Général Lelong, représentant le Chef d'État-Major Général de la Défense Nationale, et assisté du Colonel Ayme, du Secrétariat Général du Conseil Supérieur de la Défense Nationale;

Le Chef d'Escadron Noiret, de l'État-Major de l'Armée, représentant le Ministère de la Défense Nationale et de la Guerre;

Le Contre-Amiral Bourragué, sous-chef d'État-Major de la Marine, représentant le Ministère de la Marine;

Le Commandant Bailly, de l'État-Major de l'Armée de l'Air, représentant le Ministère de l'Air.

Le Ministère des Colonies sera représenté par le Colonel Ayme, qui appartient aux troupes coloniales.

No. 214

Mr. Carvell (Munich) to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 7¹ Telegraphic [C 2924/13/18]

MUNICH, March 12, 1939, 12.45 p.m.

Addressed to Berlin telegram No. 7.

I understand state of emergency ('Spannungszustand') has been declared for Munich garrison. There have been troop movements during the week-end in direction of Austria.

Repeated to Foreign Office.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Berlin as telegram No. 7, and was repeated as No. 5 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 12 at 3 p.m.

No. 215

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 4.0 p.m.)

No. 63 Telegraphic [C 2968/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 12, 1939, 1.40 p.m.

According to a telephone message from His Majesty's Consul, Bratislava, at 11 a.m. Sunday¹ things are outwardly calm but it is impossible to say what is happening below the surface. Public buildings are now occupied by German volunteer (F.S.) organization and Hlinka guard, the Government troops having been withdrawn. Yesterday evening the German party were obtaining arms and there were anti-Jewish riots. All was quiet, however, by midnight.

The new Government's position is uncertain as there appear to be two groups in Hlinka guard, one supporting Sidor and the other against him.

Durcansky was to have spoken from Vienna again at midnight but no speech was audible perhaps owing to interruptions.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ i.e. March 12.

No. 216

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 64 Telegraphic [C 2923/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 12, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 59.¹

A new Slovak Government has now been appointed as follows:—

Premier, M. Sidor, Interior, Dr. Martin Sokol, Schools, Josef Sivak, Transport and Public Works, Julius Stano (hitherto Secretary-General of Slovak Peoples' Party and Vice-President of Diet), Economics, Dr. Peter Zatko (Secretary General of Slovak Industrial Union), Finance, Dr. Alexander

¹ No. 209.

Hrnciar (Slovak delegate in Finance Ministry in Prague), Justice, Dr. Gejza Fritz (Senator and member of Slovak Diet). M. Teplansky is not included in new Government.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 217

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 87 Telegraphic [C 2927/7/12]

BERLIN, March 12, 1939, 2.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 85.¹

Up to the present I have no evidence that the German Government intend to exploit the present unrest in Czecho-Slovakia. On the contrary both my Italian and Belgian colleagues whom I saw last night and who visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday have gained the impression that the German Government are viewing the whole question calmly and do not for the moment contemplate forceful action. The former however added that there seemed to him to be two currents of opinion here as regards handling of this question.

The press still continues to report events fully but without official comment.

My impression is that Herr Hitler who is master of turning circumstances to suit his purposes at the moment is waiting to see things develop. If he decides to intervene he can for purposes of public consumption here base his action either on Germany's right to protect German minority or on Slovak right to self-determination.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 203.

No. 218

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 13, 11.20 a.m.)*

No. 88 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2978/7/12]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

My telegram No. 87.¹

The whole of the press this morning devotes sensational headlines to deterioration of the situation in Czecho-Slovakia and terrorization policy of Czech authorities. Much emphasis is laid on every incident in which the German minority is alleged to have been attacked or German flag to have been insulted as well as on intrigues of Benes party and it may be consequently inferred that German Government is endeavouring to prepare public for and justify any action which Germany may see fit to take against Czecho-Slovakia in support of oppressed minorities both German and Slovak.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 217.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 13, 2.19 p.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic : by telephone [C 2985/7/12]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

My telegram No. 88.¹

The front pages of the Monday morning papers are entirely devoted to what is described as the Prague 'reign of terror'. There is as yet no editorial comment, but despatches from several parts of Czecho-Slovakia, written in the style of eye-witness accounts, lay stress on the fact that many Germans, most of whom are said to have been taking part in ceremonies connected with the celebration of the German war heroes commemoration day, were badly manhandled and beaten by what is called organised mobs. The Czech police, it is said, stood by and did nothing to prevent these outrages, except at Iglau where the police were actively engaged in forcing the Germans to take down their swastika flags.

A 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' message from Reichenberg states that at Brünn on Sunday morning the Czech mobs shouted 'Down with the swastika adherents, Benes is coming back and he will teach you!' The crowds also, it is stated, sang the old anti-German song 'Hrom a Peklo'² (Lightning and hell to the Germans).

Headlines in the 'Völkischer Beobachter' and other Monday papers are 'Unheard of Czech provocation of German nationality (Deutschtum)', 'German blood flows again at Brünn', 'Shameless attack on German heroes commemoration ceremony', 'Cries insulting the Führer', 'Mob at Brünn gives full vent to its passions'.

A later 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' message dated March 12, 9 p.m. states that the organised attack on Germans at Brünn is continuing, and that the position of the Germans is extremely serious. It can no longer be ascertained, it is said, how many Germans have become victims of Czech brutality.

The position at Pressburg is described as chaotic and it is stated that nineteen Slovaks have been killed. Messages from Pressburg make it clear that the Germans in Slovakia are in full sympathy with the Slovaks and that they are being persecuted in a like degree by the Czechs.

A later edition of the 'Völkischer Beobachter' also gives prominence to a report from Warsaw stating that Colonel Beck, speaking in Warsaw on March 11 at a meeting of the Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs, said that the national sentiments of the Slovak people had grown so strong that they should be given the opportunity to play an active rather than a passive part in politics. No other passages from Colonel Beck's speech were quoted.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 218.

² lit. 'Thunder and Hell'.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 13, 5.40 p.m.)

No. 91 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 2999/7/12]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

German Government is keeping its secret as to its exact intentions in regard to Czech-Slovak imbroglio. The Italian Ambassador seems as much in the dark as my French colleague and myself since he called yesterday on Czechoslovak Minister and asked him for information on this point.

In the meantime there seems no doubt that there is considerable movement of mechanized troops going on in the direction of Breslau and Vienna whither the Military Attaché went on Saturday to see for himself. This combined with increasing violence of German press indicates that German Government is contemplating some form of intervention either by force or by ultimatum under armed menace.

French Ambassador called on me this morning and as Czech Minister had asked to do so also I invited former to wait and see M. Mastny with me. Latter told us that he had been instructed to ask German Government what their intentions were. He had so far been unable to arrange an interview with State Secretary who had apparently gone away to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs probably at his country place. (Herr von Ribbentrop went yesterday to Kiel to bring back his wife who underwent a serious operation there 10 days ago).

Only advice which French Ambassador and I could give M. Mastny was to keep (if he can) in as close touch as possible with the German Government and to endeavour to reassure the latter as to influence in Prague of adherents of late President Benes. There is considerable reason to think that the threatening attitude of the German Government is due at least in part to the belief that M. Benes' party is contemplating a *coup* with a view to provoking international complications. We further strongly recommended M. Mastny to urge his Government to avoid action against German subjects in Czechoslovakia.

I myself asked early this morning to see State Secretary with a view to enquiry how situation was developing and received the same answer as Czech Minister.

French Ambassador will not do so in order to avoid giving the impression of joint *démarche*.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 221

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 92 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3021/19/18]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

It is announced here that Dr. Tiso has received an official invitation from Herr Hitler to come to Berlin. It is understood that he arrived here by air this afternoon accompanied by Karmasin.

Herr Hitler leaves tomorrow evening for Vienna to attend parade of troops commemorating the entry into Vienna of last year.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 222

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 66 Telegraphic [C 3016/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 13, 1939, 6.15 p.m.

Following is continuation of my immediately preceding telegram.¹

The Slovak authorities closed the bridge-head at Bratislava last night to stop the importation of German arms. According to reliable authority 6,000 rifles have been brought over in boats.

His Majesty's Consul-General [sic]² at Bratislava's general impression was that the new Government was not yet securely in power and was taking action, liable to weaken its position, against its adversaries. Release of prisoners would for example play into the hands of the extremists. There was a general expectancy of serious trouble in forty-eight hours.

As against this I should mention that the Minister for Foreign Affairs professed optimism in a conversation with my United States colleague this morning. He thought that the new Slovak Government were settling down and denied stories that the Hlinka guard were out of hand. He said that order was being maintained by the police and gendarmerie alone, the military having been withdrawn.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 224. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

² Mr. Pares was Consul at Bratislava.

No. 223

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 13, 6.45 p.m.)*

No. 90 Telegraphic [C 3020/13/18]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939, 6.35 p.m.

Following received from His Majesty's Consul, Dresden, No. 6, March 13, begins:

My French colleague was informed by a reliable eye-witness last night that

he had been held up for nearly three hours near Breslau by columns of armoured cars going East. The men looked tired and seemed to have come some distance. The cars were moving slowly.

Dresden is quiet. There was the usual number of soldiers on leave in the streets last night.

No. 224

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 65 Telegraphic [C 3015/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 13, 1939, 6.35 p.m.

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava reported by telephone 12.30 p.m. today as follows:—

M. Sidor yesterday demanded: (1) withdrawal of Czech troops from Slovakia and (2) release of prisoners in Slovakia within twenty four hours and of those held outside Slovakia (said to number about 200) within forty eight hours. According to the German minority press he also announced that Hlinka guard would be used as auxiliary police.

Same press reported that M. Morgas (one of Slovak extremists) had proclaimed that M. Sidor was unworthy to lead Hlinka guard whose officials should not recognise any government nominated by Prague and especially not the Sidor Government.

New Government[']s relations with German minority did not yet seem to be on a satisfactory basis. According to latter's press shots had been fired at Deutsche Haus and house next door had been occupied by police. M. Karmasin leader of the minority had not yet been confirmed in his previous position of State Secretary. In an interview with the press he left it vague whether or not he recognised new Government. Continuation follows.¹

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ See No. 222.

No. 225

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 93 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3025/19/18]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

Following is repetition of Vienna telegram No. 6 of March 13.

According to a very reliable source a general 'Alarmbereitschaft' was declared yesterday for seventeen army corps. Military Attaché secured identifications of large proportion of units of local garrison in Vienna yesterday. Same source reports movement of second armoured division towards the frontier in the Bratislava direction. Military Attaché covered area Vienna-(? Hainberg)-Neusiedlersee-Bruck this morning and except for

¹ i.e. state of readiness.

isolated cases of vehicles of second armoured division in Bruck he saw nothing indicative of abnormal military activity. A local source reported only a few troops at Kaiser Steinbruch.

Austrian press and wireless strongly supporting separatist movement of Hlinka guards with reference to self-determination. Last night Vienna Radio announced many cases of alleged oppression and ill-treatment of Germans by Czechs. Military Attaché in large coffee-house noted that people appeared puzzled and rather indifferent.

Vienna Radio is continuing to transmit anti-Czech propaganda in the Slovak language at frequent intervals.

Agitation in Slovakia is clearly being fostered by party in Vienna but motives for so doing are not clear and it is possibly semi-independent action by the party which may or may not be supported by Berlin Government.

Extremists in the party are . . .² German troops will occupy Bratislava and support the agitation for the independence of Slovakia to which Polish, Hungarian and Ruthenian minorities are said to be opposed whilst German minority supports the Hlinka [? movement].

It is generally considered here Hlinka movement was preparation for . . .² *coup* but that Prague acted before their preparations were complete.

Repeated to Prague.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 226

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 67 Telegraphic [C 3017/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 13, 1939, 7.5 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 88.¹

There are also ominous signs here extending beyond Slovakia.

Reuter's correspondent (a Czecho-Slovak national of German race whose sympathies are generally believed to be strongly pro-German) telephoned to the Legation this afternoon to say that clash had occurred between the Czech and German populations in several towns throughout the country including Brno. Today 'Die Zeit' also reports clash in Brno yesterday. I learn on the other hand from the British Vice-Consul at Brno that no clash occurred there yesterday but that they are expected this afternoon. I learned yesterday from a Czech source that according to their information German students at Brno had received orders to provoke trouble. The Czech population was accordingly warned on the wireless to avoid being provoked. A great feature of last year's crisis was of course the provocative incidents, news of which was often reported before they actually occurred. (Perhaps the same methods are being used now.)

According to other journalistic sources MM. Tiso and Karmasin have gone to Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Budapest.

¹ No. 218.

No. 227

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 103 Telegraphic [C 3023/13/18]

PARIS, March 13, 1939, 9.40 p.m.

Military Attaché was informed this morning by French General Staff that abnormal activity has been reported in certain units of third (Berlin) German armoured division. In addition, unusual movements of mechanised columns have been taking place in a southerly direction from Berlin, and certain infantry and S.S. Police units have been ordered to hold themselves in readiness to move at short notice. The measures which have been taken up to date are reminiscent of those which preceded the 'Anschluss' and French General Staff are of the opinion that they are connected with the present happenings in Slovakia.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

No. 228

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 76 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2937/281/17]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 13, 1939

Your telegram No. 94.¹

1. The basis on which the forthcoming staff conversations are to proceed having now been settled, I think it desirable that any further communications that may have to be exchanged should pass through Service channels, and not through the Quai d'Orsay, unless of course any question of policy should arise. You should, therefore, so far as possible avoid any further discussion on this subject with the Quai d'Orsay.

2. I shall accordingly be glad if you will instruct your Military Attaché to make a communication to General Gamelin or to his representative in the sense of the remaining paragraphs of the present telegram.

3. His Majesty's Government will be glad to receive the French representatives whose names are given in your telegram under reference, but it will not be possible to start the conversations as early as they suggest for the reasons that follow.

4. We are working on a memorandum in which we set forth our conception of the broad strategic problem and our general policy for the conduct of the war. This is a most secret document and copies of it will shortly be sent for communication by your Military Attaché to General Gamelin in person for distribution to the Chiefs of Staff. It is drafted on comprehensive lines and we think the French representatives will find that they will require some little time to study it. What we have in mind is that the French representatives should, before the conversations open, send to London a paper com-

¹ No. 204.

menting on and supplementing our own paper, since by this means a common basis for the discussion could be ensured. We hope the French representatives will agree to this course.

5. Although the first stage of the conversations proper will take the form of a joint discussion of the broad strategical problem, we think that valuable time might be saved if concurrent discussions were to continue on individual aspects of defence not dependent upon joint consideration. These discussions would be in continuation and in extension of the contacts which have already been established between the respective naval, army and air staffs.

6. We attach importance to ensuring that the knowledge of our mutual plans is confined to the Service staffs on both sides.

7. Our representatives will be Captain Danckwerts, Brigadier Kennedy and Group Captain Slessor, assisted by one other officer from each of the three Services, and by your three Service Attachés. (I trust that you will be able to spare them, since their assistance will be valuable for maintaining liaison and for interpreting.)

8. It is requested that the French representatives should wear plain clothes on all occasions during their visit, since if they wear uniform publicity cannot be avoided. For the same reason we hope that they will travel to London as inconspicuously as possible.

No. 229

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14)

No. 99 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3034/15/18]

BERLIN, March 13, 1939

The 'Völkischer Beobachter' of March 11 gives prominence to a despatch from its London correspondent, headed 'A dove of peace from London', in which an article by the Parliamentary Correspondent of 'The Times', in its issue of March 10, is quoted at length as an example of the general view expressed in the British Press that the international situation is showing signs of general improvement.

In comment on the despatch, the 'Völkischer Beobachter' writes that it is no secret that the Prime Minister has for some time been thinking of taking the initiative in the field of European politics. But in view of the fact that both the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet had expressed the view that such initiative was as yet premature and that a diplomatically unprepared conference would do more harm than good, the commentator wonders what the reason may be for coming into the open in this manner. He considers this attitude, which he regards as being inspired by the Government, to be a *ballon d'essai* which should be noted with all due reserve.

Foreign Office Memorandum on the Position of His Majesty's Government in connexion with possible Developments of the Slovak Crisis¹

[C 3381/7/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 13, 1939

In his despatch No. 434² of December 8 reviewing the position of Czecho-Slovakia after the Munich and Vienna awards Mr. Newton said that the Czechs had for the first time woken up to the fact that the Slovak question existed in a highly intractable form. In spite of the material benefits the Czechs had showered upon Slovakia they had failed to win over the Slovaks who took Czech misfortunes as their opportunity and modelled their behaviour upon that of the Germans. For example a one-party system was installed, the Jews were oppressed and the Hlinka Guard was organised on S.S. lines. Nor has German sympathy been lacking for Slovak aspirations.

The Central Government at Prague were therefore faced with the possibility (a) of disintegration of the composite state from within or (b) deliberate disintegration by Germany. In order to obviate (a) the Czecho-Slovak Government agreed in November to establish autonomy on the lines of the original Pittsburgh Agreement. The autonomy law of November 22 provided for a provincial government with administrative and executive authority, for a Slovak Diet with wide legislative authority but certain subjects of common interest were reserved for the Central Government at Prague. At the same time M. Sidor was appointed to represent Slovakia in the Central Government at Prague. At this time M. Sidor was an out-and-out Slovak nationalist and publicly announced that his duty was to 'liquidate "the centralist regime" all along the line'. Until very recently there were no signs of German intervention on the lines of (b). On the contrary by the Vienna Award Berlin handed over valuable Slovak territory to Hungary.

Recent reports from secret sources and statements made by Herr von Ribbentrop to Mr. Gwatkin³ and Lord Brocket⁴ in Berlin last month have, however, suggested that Germany had determined upon a more active policy *vis-à-vis* Czecho-Slovakia which might involve the substitution of what was euphemistically termed 'dominion status' for the present uneasy independence of that country. The recent refusal of the German Government to implement its undertaking to join in the Munich guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia also points in this direction. As, however, the Czech Government have been very careful since Munich to give Germany no legitimate cause

¹ This memorandum was written by Mr. F. K. Roberts.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 413.

³ See Appendix II.

⁴ Lord Brocket had attended the dinner of the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft in Berlin on February 16. In a memorandum on his visit, communicated to the Foreign Office, he recorded a conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop who had said that if the Czechs 'did not realize that they had to work in harmony with Germany and respect her wishes . . . then there would again be trouble'.

for complaint, the obvious weak link in the Czecho-Slovak structure which would provide Germany with an excuse for intervention was to be found in Slovak discontent.

The position in Slovakia seems to have been thoroughly unsatisfactory since Munich. The wine of newly acquired semi-independence seems to have gone to the easily turned Slovak heads and the Czechs who are still required to assist financially in the administration of Slovakia have received considerable provocation. There have been many rumours of Slovak intrigues with Vienna and Berlin and stories of visits by Slovak ministers to Berlin unknown to the Central Government, in whose hands questions of foreign affairs were centralised. The grounds given to Mr. Newton by the Czech Foreign Minister⁵ for the dismissal of Dr. Tiso and his Government was that there had been persistent Slovak propaganda under the leadership of Dr. Durcansky (a member of the Slovak Government) for the complete independence of Slovakia under German protection. When asked for further financial assistance the Czech Government had therefore insisted upon the cessation of separatist propaganda. According to the Czech official broadcast,⁶ certain factors in the Slovak Government had not been showing sufficient resistance to subversive activities and the federal interests of the State were thereby threatened. This broadcast went on to assure the Slovaks that their autonomy on the lines of the Pittsburgh Agreement would remain intact and that the aim of the Czech Government was the maintenance of Slovak freedom in the common Czecho-Slovak Republic. Both the official Czech broadcast and Dr. Chvalkowsky maintained that there was no evidence that such propaganda had been inspired from the Reich or by the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia.

If German propaganda is not intensified the natural solution of the present crisis would be the consolidation of Slovak autonomy demands by M. Sidor,⁷ who is a 100 per cent. autonomist, under safeguards guaranteeing the continued association of Slovakia in the Czecho-Slovak Republic. This solution would, we understand, be agreeable to Poland. According to views personally expressed by a Polish Foreign Office official⁸ Poland would equally be satisfied with the union of Slovakia with Hungary or a truly independent Slovakia. In so far as the German press has been taking up a line highly favourable to Slovak aspirations and Germany has hitherto strongly resented any criticism of the Vienna Award, the union of Slovakia with Hungary seems a most unlikely development. A truly independent Slovakia is equally unlikely as Slovakia is not financially self-supporting and judging by the efforts of her leaders in the last few months, she is completely unfit for any real degree of independence. The most likely development of the present situation would therefore seem to be a Slovakia either nominally independent or bound by even looser federal ties than at present to Prague and dominated in either event by German influence. This is clearly the direction in which events have

⁵ See No. 200.

⁶ See No. 198.

⁷ *Note in original:* He has however a bad reputation and may have been bought over by the Czechs.

⁸ See No. 207.

been tending. Until this morning the Government remained on the fence and Dr. Tiso's appeal⁹ to Herr Hitler has, we understand, so far been unanswered.¹⁰ At the same time M. Durcansky has been given facilities to broadcast subversive messages from Vienna.¹¹

The tone of this morning's German papers¹² suggests, however, that Germany may very shortly be coming off the fence. There are tremendous attacks on Czech terrorisation and this press campaign suggests that Germany may proclaim herself compelled to take action in support of oppressed minorities, whether Slovak or German. In this connexion it is worth bearing in mind that there are some 113,000 Germans in Slovakia.

If Germany chooses to move, Herr Hitler might decide to achieve his ambition, of which he was deprived last September, of a triumphal march upon Prague. Alternatively, he might occupy a line in Moravia, so effectively dividing the Czechs from the Slovaks and then impose his own arbitration which would no doubt include semi-independence for Slovakia and a government under complete German domination in Prague, i.e. the German conception of dominion status.¹³ There are several reliable indications that the necessary preparatory measures are being taken for action on these lines.

If German intervention takes place there will clearly be considerable pressure upon H.M.G. to take some action. In fact Mr. Sorensen¹⁴ has already put down a question for tomorrow asking the Prime Minister whether he is aware of the apprehension existing concerning the imminent possibility of further alterations of the frontiers of Czecho-Slovakia and what action he is taking in the matter. It is clearly undesirable to make any protest which we are not prepared to implement or to make statements which would only irritate Herr Hitler without affecting his plans. If the internal situation in Germany has convinced him that some action is essential in Czecho-Slovakia, there is nothing we can do to stop him, short of war. As is well known, the Germans have always maintained that Czecho-Slovakia is no concern of H.M.G. and it is certainly the case that we should only have any *locus standi* for making a protest at Berlin if Germany were guilty of territorial aggression against the Czecho-Slovak State. In that event it might be held that we were bound by our undertaking in the annex to the Munich Agreement to stand by our offer in the Anglo-French proposals of September 19 to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czecho-Slovak state against unprovoked aggression. We could not, however, take any effective action unless the French Government also decided to take action and as the German Government have hitherto refused to bring the general international guarantee into force by implementing their own Munich pledge, it seems to me most unlikely that France would wish to take any action in the matter.

⁹ See No. 203.

¹⁰ This memorandum was evidently written before the receipt of No. 221.

¹¹ See No. 208.

¹² See No. 218.

¹³ *Note in original*: The recent activities of Czech "Fascists" are worth noting in this connexion.

¹⁴ Member of Parliament for West Leyton.

If Germany avoids direct territorial aggression the position remains technically an internal constitutional question with which we are not directly concerned. Nor could the Vienna Award be invoked. This Award by Germany and Italy only dealt with the frontier between Slovakia and Hungary and it would hardly be possible for Signor Mussolini, on his own initiative or at our request, to intervene in the present dispute on the basis of his interest in that Award. The Anglo-German Declaration of September 30 provides that 'the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries' but Herr Hitler would never admit that the present Slovak dispute was a question concerning Great Britain. Presumably the German Government would take the same line if the French Government invoked the terms of the German-French declaration of December 6, paragraph 3 of which provided that the two Governments 'were resolved to remain in contact with regard to all questions interesting their two countries and mutually to consult should the latter evolution of those questions threaten to lead to international difficulties'. In view, however, of the French alliance with Czecho-Slovakia which presumably is technically still in force pending the completion of the guarantee arrangements foreseen at Munich, the French might maintain that the present dispute was a question interesting France and Germany and therefore requiring mutual consultation between the two Governments.

In all the circumstances, His Majesty's Government would have no *locus standi* for taking any initiative in this matter and any attempt to check Herr Hitler by public statements or invoking Signor Mussolini's support would only seem calculated to precipitate a solution unfavourable to Czecho-Slovakia.

No. 231

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 69 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3018/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939

An official communiqué published in press of March 14 states that President of Republic yesterday decided to call a meeting of Slovak Diet at Bratislava today at 10 a.m. The Czecho-Slovak wireless broadcast last night an announcement that Dr. Tiso had informed the Directorate of Slovak Peoples' Party which met yesterday morning that he had been invited by Herr Hitler to visit Berlin. The announcement continues that Dr. Tiso had arrived in Berlin by aeroplane at 5.0 p.m. accompanied by Dr. Durcansky and the German Consul-General at Bratislava. On arrival he was welcomed by the Chief of Diplomatic Protocol and proceeded to visit Herr von Ribbentrop who accompanied him to Herr Hitler. In the evening Dr. Sidor requested the Prague Government to communicate to the President of Republic the request that the Slovak Diet should be called on the date originally fixed, namely, March 14. (It was reported on March 13 that the date had been

postponed to March 28). Dr. Tiso also made the same request direct to President of Republic. On M. Beran's advice President of Republic summoned the Diet and Dr. Tiso was expected to return overnight to Bratislava to take part in the session and in the Government deliberations and the conferences of the Directorate of the Slovak Peoples' Party. The announcement concluded that 'today's meeting of the Slovak Diet will be a historic day of the National Assembly of the Slovaks who will decide the future and the existence of the Slovak nation through their representatives elected in January'.

The Czech-Slovak Press Bureau reports that Dr. Durcansky and Herr Karmasin, the leader of the German minority in Czecho-Slovakia, were received by Herr Hitler at the same time as Dr. Tiso.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 232

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 11.35 a.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3030/19/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

I learn from generally well informed source that Herr Hitler has made up his mind to take action with a view to separation of Slovakia from Bohemia and possibly to insist on customs union with Germany. Presumably his idea is thus to dominate both and while leaving them autonomy to crush all M. Benes, Communist or Jewish cliques therein. It is said that Field-Marshal Göring has secured Signor Mussolini's concurrence. If the German troops march in, probable form would be the occupation of line of demarcation between the two provinces (see my telegram No. 85¹) but possibility of occupation of Prague on alleged pretext of protection of Iglau Germans cannot be excluded. German Press this morning announces 50 German casualties in disorder in that enclave.

The above may only be extreme party view and Herr Hitler may not yet have taken final decision. I am seeing State Secretary at midday.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 203.

No. 233

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 12.55 p.m.)

No. 71 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3036/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939

As Minister for Foreign Affairs was at a Cabinet meeting I have seen chief permanent official at Ministry for Foreign Affairs, M. Krno, and found him at 11.15 this morning completely in the dark as to the German intentions.

He denied reports in circulation that German Government had made any *démarche* with Czecho-Slovak Government officially . . .¹ only yesterday afternoon Minister for Foreign Affairs had invited German Chargé d'Affaires to call and ascertained that he was without any news as to the attitude of his Government. M. Krno also mentioned that the Government in Prague had not been aware that Tiso continued to be recognized by German Government.

2. Slovak Parliament were now sitting and M. Krno evidently anticipated announcement of serious decision. He admitted that in various parts of Bohemia and Moravia there had been minor clashes with German minorities but none with any serious consequences. He emphasized that since execution of decisions of Munich there were no towns or villages with any large German minority left. Nor had the Germans under Herr Kundt made any complaint which could not be satisfied. No serious disorders were therefore to be anticipated and there could of course be no question of fighting as resistance was militarily impossible. Recent developments were therefore all the more mystifying.

3. On my enquiring whether substantial changes in the Government at Prague were likely M. Krno shrugged his shoulders and said that anything was of course possible.

Repeated to Berlin, Budapest and Warsaw.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

No. 234

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14)*¹

No. 104 Telegraphic [C 3051/7/12]

PARIS, March 14, 1939, 1.22 p.m.

My telegram No. 193.²

Minister for Foreign Affairs, President of Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate and General Gamelin dined at the Embassy last night to meet the President of the Republic. They did not seem unduly perturbed about the Slovak crisis although of course they feel that the situation must be watched.

General Gamelin told me that it would not be correct to say that so far there had been any form of German mobilization. Military Attaché was told this morning at the Ministry of War that there is as yet no confirmation of the rumour in this morning's press that the 1913 class had been called to the colours.

Both M. Bonnet and M. Bérenger feel that the less we interfere in this crisis the better. They both remarked that this renewed rift between Czechs and Slovaks only shows that we nearly went to war last autumn to boost up a State that was not 'viable'.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

² No. 227.

No. 235

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 2.0 p.m.)

No. 95 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3038/19/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

My telegram No. 94.¹

State Secretary explained the attitude of the German Government to me this morning as follows:

They regarded Tiso's Government as the only legal one for Slovakia and his dismissal by the Prague Government as contrary to the Constitution.

All Germany wanted was order, the eradication of Benes spirit and proper treatment for the Germans. He asserted that reports of their ill-treatment in the provinces were fraudulent [*sic*].

State Secretary said that he was still unable to tell me what exact action would be taken and I gathered that no final decision had yet been taken though possibly State Secretary is himself not fully informed. He assured me twice over that the German Government wished to arrange matters 'in a decent way'. They had not sent an ultimatum to Prague and at the moment were not in any contact with the Czech Government. I asked him whether they desired contact. He was non-committal but raised no objection when I said that I proposed to recommend the Czech Minister here to advise his Government to approach the German Government direct.

When I complained of the Vienna radio, State Secretary's reply was that Austria was largely independent of Berlin and often took a line contrary to official policy here.

State Secretary said that Tiso was back at Pressburg and Slovak Diet might well declare today its complete independence of Bohemia. (Presumably Tiso has been told to arrange this.) When I pointed out that separation seemed to me contrary to Germany's own interests, he said that there were several points of view on this subject and again repeated that all his Government wanted was peace and order.

He was not certain whether Herr Hitler would leave or not for Vienna tonight. In fact my general impression was that no definite line of action has been decided upon but that the use of force was certainly not excluded if Prague Government proved recalcitrant.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 232.

No. 236

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 2.0 p.m.)

No. 96 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3039/13/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

Assistant Military Attaché reports that rumours of German troop movements towards Czecho-Slovak frontiers continue to circulate in Berlin. He

reports the following but is unable to confirm. Movement of troops from Dresden to Breslau on Sunday night. Movement of troops eastwards on Breslau-Beuthen road. Fourth armoured division reported moved through Iranberg [*sic*]¹ southwards. Troops reported to have left Weimar. Movement of troops between Leipzig and Nuremberg southwards reported. Believed bulk of third armoured division still in peace list garrison.

¹ This name appears to be corrupt.

No. 237

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 46 Telegraphic [C 3052/7/12]

WARSAW, March 14, 1939, 3.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 44.¹

M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet informs me that M. Bonnet has asked the Polish Ambassador in Paris for an appreciation of Poland's attitude to Slovak crisis. M. Beck has not yet replied and is considering the matter. His Chef de Cabinet evidently wished to know what British attitude was. I should therefore be grateful for any guidance as I am to see the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs tomorrow morning.

2. Meanwhile should there be any question of a reassembly of Munich Powers I venture to submit that Poland is vitally interested in the future of Slovakia and would certainly expect to be invited to participate. In the present mood she might well be a helpful factor.

3. There is no doubt that the Polish Government are nervous as to the present situation which places them in a very embarrassing position *vis-à-vis* Germany. The dependence of Slovakia on Germany is one contingency which the Polish Government have sought to avoid. Chef de Cabinet expressed personal opinion that it was becoming increasingly difficult to see how the integrity of Czecho-Slovakia could be maintained. Position which may be problematical may also become more acute.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

¹ No. 207.

No. 238

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 4.15 p.m.)

No. 97 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3056/19/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

Czech Minister informs me that Slovak Diet has voted for complete independence. I gave him account of my conversation with State Secretary this morning and advised him to recommend to his Government that they

should establish direct contact with German Government. At the same time I expressed opinion that the German terms would be recognition of Slovak independence, elimination of M. Benes' faction, repression of Communism and Jews and in fact more or less nazification of Bohemia.

M. Mastny said that he had been instructed yesterday to let the German Government know that M. Chvalkovsky was prepared to come to Berlin for consultation with them but that at the last moment he had been told not to make the communication pending further instructions. According to M. Mastny this might mean that the Prague Government was being re-constructed and that possibly M. Chvalkovsky would be no longer Minister for Foreign Affairs. He said, however, that he would telephone to Prague and ask whether he might not still make this communication. I told him that in my opinion his Government had nothing to lose by adopting the attitude of readiness to discuss the matter with the German Government.

French Ambassador, who spoke to me after I had seen M. Mastny, is telephoning to Paris suggesting that his Government should advise Prague in the above sense.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 239

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 4.30 p.m.)

No. 75 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3058/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava reports that the declaration of Slovak independence was carried unanimously by the Slovak Diet this morning in the presence of all the deputies except Esterhazy the Magyar minority leader. M. Sidor resigned before the resolution was taken. The resolution was read by M. Sokol after M. Tiso had given a report on his negotiations in Berlin.

His Majesty's Consul describes the new Government as a government of concentration composed as it is of four members of the Tiso Government, three members of the Sidor Government, and three new members.

The most important appointments are M. Tiso—Prime Minister, Dr. Tuka—Deputy Prime Minister, M. Durcansky—Minister for Foreign Affairs, and M. Sidor—Interior.

No decision in regard to the President has been announced.

The declaration of independence was received with complete calm in Bratislava and no demonstrations had hitherto taken place.

His Majesty's Consul has no confirmation of the report on the German wireless that M. Tiso has asked for Germany's protection. He mentioned that M. Mach in a broadcast this afternoon stated that the declaration of Slovak independence should enable the Czechs and Slovaks to live in friendship.

No. 240

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 7.15 p.m.)

No. 72 Telegraphic [C 3080/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 71.¹

My informant was naturally anxious to be discreet and said nothing which might give offence if it reached German ears. Quite personally and anonymously he suggested that a possible explanation for the obscurity of German policy was that officials on the Wilhelmstrasse who wished to work through Prague were not in agreement with party and particularly Seyss-Inquart.

He did not deny there might be German troop movements in the direction of Moravia or concentrations of S.S. and S.A. near Bratislava. He seemed convinced that development in Slovakia would not be welcome to Poland or Hungary. As regards Ruthenia he had heard a rumour for what it might be worth of some form of personal union between Governments of Slovakia and Ruthenia.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 233.

No. 241

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14)¹

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 3050/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939

I am informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the President of the Republic, accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs are leaving for Berlin by special train at 4 p.m.

There have been reports throughout the day that the Government has resigned but these are not officially confirmed. It may be that any decision in that respect will await the result of the talks in Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ The hours of despatch and receipt of this telegram are not recorded.

No. 242

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 5.15 p.m.)

No. 29 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 3053/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 14, 1939

Head of Hungarian Military Intelligence told me today that although the movement in Slovakia had been engineered from Vienna, its rapid development and Czech reaction have taken Berlin by surprise. He thought the inevitable result would be the formation of an independent Slovakia under German control.

If this came about, the Executive Committee could not let the opportunity slip again as in (? November)¹ but was decided to march into Ruthenia at once and put Germany before a *fait accompli*.

I asked if Hungary had as yet taken any military measures. Colonel Andorka replied that reservists were being therefore called up, but that this was a very urgent step seeing that this year's contingent of recruits had been very lately incorporated.

Colonel Andorka told me that this morning's clash near Munkacs was the usual frontier 'scraps' but that it had been followed up energetically, and Hungarians had occupied one Ruthenian village.

In serious press circles here there are reports, said to have been given out by German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the effect that fourteen German divisions are ready to move at once into Bohemia and Moravia. Colonel Andorka tells me Hungarian staff know only of the concentration of two German divisions south of Dresden [but] that very strong Vienna corps is being held in immediate readiness.

M. Eckhardt,² who was also lunching with me, told me that a decision to march into Ruthenia was definite. He had been 'consulting' as to whether Germans would react forcibly and had expressed the opinion that they would not.

I let him see that I did not share his optimism.

Repeated to Prague, Warsaw and Berlin.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² Leader of the Hungarian Small-holders' Party.

No. 243

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 5.20 p.m.)

No. 30 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3054/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 14, 1939

Ultimatum expiring in 12 hours was handed by Secretary-General of Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czech Minister at 3 p.m.

Reuters have telegraphed full summary.

Main points are: withdrawal of Czech troops from Ruthenia, release of interned Hungarians, arming and freedom of organisations of persons of Hungarian nationality or race in Ruthenia.

No. 244

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 31 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3055/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 14, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

My Czecho-Slovak colleague anticipates that Hungarians will tonight cross the Ruthene frontier at several points but not penetrate the country too

¹ No. 243.

deeply for fear of provoking reactions from Germany. They will then send in M. Brody,² who is their . . .³ to set up an autonomous Government which would proclaim union with Hungary.

Tomorrow is a Hungarian national festival.⁴

Repeated to Prague, Warsaw and Berlin.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 245.

³ The text is here uncertain.

⁴ i.e. the anniversary of the 1848 revolution.

No. 245

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 76 Telegraphic [C 3082/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 14, 1939, 6.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 74.¹

Informant states that there were reports that [*sic?* of] German troop concentrations around the Bohemian frontier and mentioned Aussig in this connexion.

There is widespread apprehension in unofficial quarters that a German occupation may be imminent but Prague retains its habitual calm.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 241.

No. 246

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 100 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 3061/19/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

Prague telegram No. 74.¹

Although of course I cannot at present say with certainty what will be the basis of the conversations between Herr Hitler and the Czecho-Slovak representatives I understand from sources in touch with the German authorities that the demands to be made . . .² Hitler may be on the lines of the reduction of the Czecho-Slovak army to police force strength . . .² Bohemia and Moravia under German protection with customs and currency unions. The same arrangement is said to be in progress in regard to Slovakia. It is believed Hitler may insist on some form of token military occupation which, in the case of Bohemia and Moravia would be effected to ensure the execution of the terms of the agreement, and as regards Slovakia to assist in the restoration of order in that territory.

As events may move quickly in the next twenty-four hours I am reporting the above under full reserve in order that you may be aware of the way in which developments appear to be shaping.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 241.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 247

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 49 Telegraphic [C 3090/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 14, 1939, 8.30 p.m.*

Please take earliest possible opportunity of conveying following message to the German Government.

His Majesty's Government have no desire to interfere unnecessarily in matters with which other Governments may be more directly concerned than this country. They are, however, as the German Government will surely appreciate, deeply concerned for the success of all efforts to restore confidence and a relaxation of tension in Europe. This seems to them more particularly desirable at a moment when a start is being made with discussions on economic subjects to which, as His Majesty's Government believe, the German Government attach no less importance than they do themselves, and the fruitful development of which depends so directly upon general state of confidence.

From that point of view they would deplore any action in Central Europe which would cause a setback to the growth of this general confidence on which all improvement in the economic situation depends and to which such improvement might in its turn contribute.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 248

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 98 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3060/19/18]

BERLIN, *March 14, 1939*

My telegram No. 95.¹

In conversation with the State Secretary I took the line that though admittedly Czecho-Slovakia was the problem which primarily and directly affected Germany His Majesty's Government could not on general principles and having particular regard to the Munich settlement, remain entirely indifferent; I impressed upon the State Secretary on this account the extreme importance of the form in which Germany handled the situation. I also mentioned I hoped that nothing would be done in a manner to mar the effect of the visit of the President of the Board of Trade. At the same time I drew his attention to the moderation shown in the British press on the subject. State Secretary expressed appreciation of the latter.

Only possible chance of securing from the German Government the least unsatisfactory solution of the whole question and localising the conflict of interests lies in the moderate attitude of the Governments and press abroad,

¹ No. 235.

and in the recognition of the fact that the guarantors of the Vienna Award are the parties primarily interested.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 249

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14)*¹

No. 99 Telegraphic [C 3057/19/18]

BERLIN, March 14, 1939

My telegram No. 101 Saving.²

Press reports from Czecho-Slovakia which yesterday still contained long accounts of ill-treatment of Slovaks, are now concentrating almost entirely on news of the position of the German minority with full particulars of all the alleged brutality.

Commentators say that that position has become untenable and parallels are drawn between conditions in Czecho-Slovakia today and conditions in Germany in 1918.

Germany's honour, says the 'Völkischer Beobachter', [? had] been violated to the core twenty years ago and the humiliating knowledge that Germany had lost her national honour gave the first impetus to the founding, by Adolf Hitler, of the National Socialist movement.

Those days, it is said, are recalled to one's mind by the revolting incidents which have now taken place at Brünn, a town which is claimed to have belonged to the German sphere for centuries and in which there are still 60,000 German inhabitants.

Does the mob of a foreign people, the 'Völkischer Beobachter' asks, think that it can shamelessly provoke German 'Volksgenossen' professing their adherence to the symbols of National Socialist Germany, and manhandle them and beat them until blood flows?

Conditions such as these are unbearable for members of the German nation ('Volkstum') living 20 kilometres away from the frontier of the Reich and they are therefore unbearable for the entire German nation. Prague is mistaken if it thinks it can play the deuce with Germans at the Eastern frontiers of the Reich as in the times of the Hapsburgs or of the Benes régime.

The writer concludes by saying that Englishmen everywhere in the world enjoy the protection of their Empire. 'They have become accustomed to being treated as gentlemen abroad and at home. The Empire never fails to protect an Englishman when a hair of his head is touched. Adolf Hitler has gained new world authority for the German people. We demand therefore that this authority is unconditionally respected. Also in Prague! and just in Prague!'

In a second leading article the 'Völkischer Beobachter' points out that ill-treatment of the German minority by the Czechs has been going on for some

¹ The hours of despatch and receipt of this telegram are not recorded.

² Not printed. This telegram of March 14 reported German press comment on the Czecho-Slovak situation.

time. The Czechs were obviously of the opinion that Germany had 'written off' the national groups remaining in Czecho-Slovakia after Munich and had entirely misunderstood German silence in this respect. Whereas the Czechs in Germany, who had become Germans after Munich, had been loyally treated—they were exempt from conscription—had been given work—were enjoying the benefits of the German social services and had their own schools, newspapers, wireless and electoral rights—the incidents of the last few days have proved that, with the exception of a few individual men, the Czech administration and the majority of the Czech people were still filled with the evil Hussite spirit and mentality of Benes. The only fault to be found with Germany is that for too long she did not recognise the full measures of Czech pettiness and vindictiveness. It is this poison which, as is now seen, fills the whole body of the Czech State, that represents the great and immediate danger to Central Europe.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 250

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 10.30 p.m.)

No. 47 Telegraphic [C 3104/7/12]

WARSAW, March 14, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 46.¹

M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet informed Counsellor tonight that events in Slovakia though not unexpected had developed very quickly and without any consultation between Warsaw and Berlin. In fact the German Ambassador after seeing M. Beck yesterday had gone to Berlin today to ascertain German intentions. Polish attitude was governed by the following considerations:

1. Poland was not a party to the Munich settlement and therefore had a free hand.
2. Polish opinion favoured free development of Slovakia.
3. Nevertheless much would depend on the degree of real independence of that State.
4. Poland had always considered Ruthenia as of no value to Czecho-Slovakia.
5. His personal view was that Hungary would now occupy Ruthenia with the exception of the Eastern end which Roumania might well acquire.

When asked if Poland would assist Hungary the Chef de Cabinet replied that any Polish activities would be confined to restoring and maintaining order in frontier districts.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

¹ No. 237.

No. 251

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 29 Telegraphic [C 3052/7/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 14, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 46.¹

1. -As the situation changes from hour to hour it is difficult to give you any statement of our attitude which would be valid by the time this telegram reaches you. His Majesty's Government have, however, made a communication to the German Government as shown in my telegram to Berlin No. 49.² Meanwhile His Majesty's Ambassador had, on his own initiative, made enquiries of the State Secretary in Berlin, with the result shown in his telegram No. 95.³

2. His Majesty's Government can do no more for the present than watch the situation carefully, since it is not easy to see what effective action it is open to them to take to influence developments.

3. You may inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs of above in confidence. Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 237.

² No. 247.

³ No. 235.

No. 252

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 32 Telegraphic [C 3089/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 14, 1939, 11.58 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Secretary-General explaining this evening today's events told me that after the incident of January 6 the Hungarian Government had warned the Czech Government that, in the event of any further acts of aggression on the frontier, Hungarian army would counter-attack (see Prague telegram No. 10²).

The Army had accordingly after the incident of this morning (my telegram No. 29³) crossed the frontier and occupied a Czech village.

In order to put an end to an intolerable state of affairs in which the populations of Hungarian frontier towns were living in a constant state of alarm, the Hungarian Government had presented their ultimatum.

The Secretary-General's explanation is singularly lame.

I asked him what was Germany's attitude in the matter. He said that he had as yet no indication. Germany had not been consulted. Hungary as an

¹ No. 244.

² Not printed. This telegram of January 11 reported a Note from the Hungarian Government in the terms indicated in the text and a reply from the Czecho-Slovak Government denying responsibility for the frontier incidents of which the Hungarian Government complained, and offering a mixed Hungarian—Czecho-Slovak Commission of Enquiry.

³ No. 242.

independent State, had followed the line which she had publicly affirmed she should take.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague and Warsaw.

No. 253

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18)

No. 17 Saving: Telegraphic [3419/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 14, 1939

My telegram No. 30.¹

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs handed the following Note to the Czecho-Slovak Minister at Budapest at 3 p.m. on March 14:

'M. le Ministre,

'Slovakia has to-day proclaimed her independence. The Hungarian Government is convinced that the Czechs, who obtained the admission of the Czecho-Slovak State into the ranks of independent States more than twenty years ago by appealing to the right of nations to self-determination, will in their turn have taken cognizance of the expression of the will of the Slovak, German and Hungarian population of Slovakia with its full legal and historical significance and will pay the fullest attention to it.

'Nevertheless the events which have recently taken place in the territory of Ruthenia and the constantly recurring incidents, which on the one hand endanger the peace of the Hungarian population living on the frontier and on the other hand conjure up the possibility that an attack may also be made from this area on Slovakia, which is fighting for her freedom on the basis of the right of nations to self-determination, make it the duty of the Hungarian Government to demand to [*sic?* of] the Czech Government:

'(1) That persons of Hungarian nationality who have been interned shall at once be liberated.

'(2) That the persecution of persons of Hungarian origin shall at once cease and they shall be granted complete liberty to organise themselves.

'(3) That weapons shall be issued to the Hungarian defence organisations.

'(4) That the evacuation of the territory of Ruthenia by Czech and Moravian troops shall commence within 24 hours.

'(5) That the property of Hungarian subjects and of members of the Hungarian nation shall in every way be respected.

'The Hungarian Government once again most earnestly draw the attention of the Czech Government to their Note No. 4/b of January 9, 1939.²

'The Hungarian Government emphasize that, true to their well known political principle, they would not remain indifferent if an armed Czech attack against Slovakia were launched on the Ruthene-Slovak frontier.

'The Royal Hungarian Government await an answer to this Note within twelve hours from the time it was handed over, failing which they must hold the Prague Government in every way responsible for the consequences.'

Repeated to Prague, Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ No. 243.

² See No. 252, note 2.

No. 254

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 7.25 a.m.)

No. 79 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [C 3059/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 15, 1939

According to information given to me by Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 7.15 a.m. to-day German military forces started the occupation of Bohemia at 6.0 a.m. The President of the Republic was, I was told, on his way back from Berlin.

No. 255

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 9.50 a.m.)*

No. 101 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3084/8/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

In view of the entry of German troops into Czecho-Slovakia His Majesty's Government will doubtless consider advisability of postponing the visit of the President of the Board of Trade to Germany. If so I could inform the German Government briefly that you regard the moment as inopportune for useful consideration of economic questions. Its postponement would moreover constitute a form of marking our displeasure and distrust of German methods.

It will of course be easy for German Government to convince their own people that their action was forced upon them by internal disorder in Czecho-Slovakia itself and by the necessity for protecting German lives and property particularly as the unfortunate Czech *coup* at Pressburg and the treachery of Slovaks themselves have made this pretext a plausible one in German eyes. It does not appear to me possible to prevent Germany from 'restoring order' but I would nevertheless deprecate visit at this juncture of any British Cabinet Minister.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 256

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 10.35 a.m.)*

No. 103 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3085/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Following is text of Agreement signed early this morning by Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop on behalf of Germany and by Dr. Hacha and Dr. Chwalkovsky on behalf of Czecho-Slovakia in regard to the future of the Czech state:—

'The Führer today in the presence of the Reich Minister for Foreign

Affairs Herr von Ribbentrop, received the Czecho-Slovak President, Dr. Hacha, and the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Chvalkovsky, at their request in Berlin. At the meeting the serious situation which had arisen as a result of the events of the past week on what was hitherto Czecho-Slovak territory was closely and frankly examined. Both sides gave expression to their mutual conviction that the aim of all efforts in this part of Central Europe should be the safeguarding of calm, order, and peace. The Czecho-Slovak President declared that in order to serve this purpose, and in order to secure final pacification, he placed the destiny of the Czech people and country with confidence in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich.

‘The Führer accepted this declaration and expressed his determination to take the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and to guarantee to it an autonomous development of its national life in accordance with its particular characteristics.

Berlin. March 15 1939’.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 257

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 10.45 a.m.)*

No. 104 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3086/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

My telegram No. 101.¹

Following is the text of the Führer’s order to the armed forces issued on March 15, 1939.

‘On the day of the entry of the German troops into Bohemia and Moravia the Führer has issued the following order to the German armed forces:—

“Czecho-Slovakia is in the process of disruption. In Bohemia and Moravia our German brethren are being subjected to an intolerable reign of terror.

“Accordingly as from March 15 1939 detachments of the German army and of the German Air Force will cross the frontier of Czech territory in order to assume [*sic* ? assure] impartially the safety of the lives and property of all inhabitants of the country.

“I expect of every German soldier that he should regard himself *vis-à-vis* the inhabitants of the territory which is to be occupied not as a foe but as the representative of the will of the German Reich Government to restore a tolerable order in the area in question.

“Where, however, opposition is offered to the march in, it will be broken down at once by all available methods.

“In conclusion bear in mind that you are treading Czech soil as the representatives of Great Germany”.

‘The Führer and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces—
Signed Adolf Hitler.’

Repeated to Prague.

¹ No. 255.

No. 258

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 10.45 a.m.)

No. 105 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3087/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

It is announced in the German press this morning that the Prague Government have issued an order that the entry of the German troops is not to be resisted and their orders are in every case to be followed.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 259

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 11.0 a.m.)

No. 106 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3100/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Following is text of proclamation dated March 15 of the Chancellor of the German people:—

‘Since Germany was forced a few months ago to take under her protection against the intolerable terroristic régime of Czecho-Slovakia her racial comrades living in homogenous areas, renewed and increasing incidents of a similar character have appeared in recent weeks. This could not but lead in a region where so many nationalities live side by side to intolerable conditions.

‘In reaction against these renewed assaults upon their life and liberty the nationalities have now freed themselves from Prague. Czecho-Slovakia has thereupon ceased to exist.

‘Since Sunday wild excesses have taken place in many villages to which again numerous Germans have fallen victims. From hour to hour the appeals for help from victims and persecuted are increasing.

‘From the thickly populated German language ‘islands’ which Germany’s generosity left to Czecho-Slovakia last autumn, the stream of fugitives, and people bereft of their all, is beginning again to flow into the Reich.

‘The perpetuation of these conditions must lead to the destruction of the last vestiges of order in a region in which Germany is vitally interested and which has itself belonged for over 1,000 years to the German Reich.

‘In order finally to remove this threat to peace and to create the conditions for the necessary reorganisation of this vital area, I have therefore resolved to allow German troops to march into Bohemia and Moravia today. They will disarm the terrorist bands and the Czech troops who are shielding them; they will take under their protection the lives of all who are threatened and will thus ensure the foundations for the introduction of a fundamental solution which will do justice to the meaning of a 1,000 years of history and to the practical needs of the German and Czech peoples.’

Repeated to Prague.

No. 260

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 11.10 a.m.)

No. 107 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3095/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

The High Command of the German Army has issued on March 15 the following report:—

‘Troops of the German Army led by General Blaskowitz and General List have this morning crossed the German-Czech frontiers and are advancing to their destinations as set out for this day in Bohemia and Moravia. Already yesterday evening detachments of the army and sections of the S.S. body-guard “Adolf Hitler” occupied Mährisch-Ostrau and Witkowitz.

‘Squadrons of the German Air Force led by Generals Kesselring and Sperrle and by Lieutenant-General Lohr have simultaneously today flown across the German-Czech frontiers’.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 261

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 11.15 a.m.)

No. 108 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3094/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Assistant Military Attaché called at German War Office this morning to ask if there was any information on the military situation. He was told that all information regarding military moves was now being published in the press. German troops entering Bohemia had met no opposition and Czech troops were remaining in their barracks. Occupation of Bohemia was being continued. He could get no definite answer to question whether Slovakia would be occupied. He was told troops had also marched in from direction of Vienna.

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 262

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 82 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3098/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 15, 1939

I have obtained the following information regarding events of the night.

After various interchanges between Herr von Ribbentrop and Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, the President of the Republic saw Herr Hitler at 1.15 this morning March 15. At 2 a.m. he telephoned to Prague to the President of the Council, M. Beran, to say that German troops would

begin to occupy the country at 6 a.m. The President of the Republic begged the Government to take all possible measures to ensure that there should be no resistance saying that if there were any Germany would use all the forces at her command with consequences which would be incalculable. At about 3.15 a.m. the President of the Republic again telephoned to inform his Government that he had made a declaration to the effect that he placed with confidence the fate of the nation and country in the hands of Herr Hitler. Herr Hitler took note of this declaration and replied that he would provide for autonomous existence of the country and free development of its national character. I understand furthermore that either previous to this declaration or as an introduction to it a communiqué had been issued in Berlin saying that the President of the Republic and Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs had been received at their own request by Herr Hitler and that a frank exchange of views had taken place on the situation resulting from events of last week. It was furthermore placed on record that the two parties had agreed on their desire to maintain peace, order and a good understanding in Central Europe. My informant who had been up all night had no exact text of these statements and could only give me a general account of what had occurred. He went on to say that M. Beran who had meanwhile convoked the Council of Ministers had replied that the Government approved of what the President of the Republic had done.

In the course of conversations with Prague, the warning that any resistance would have incalculable consequences was repeated.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 263

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 83 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3099/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 15, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

My informant was M. Krno, chief permanent official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and deputy for Foreign Minister. I beg that information which he gave me may not be used in any way which might later be embarrassing to him.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 262.

No. 264

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 11.55 p.m.)*

No. 102 Telegraphic [C 3102/15/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939, 12.2 p.m.

Your telegram No. 49.¹

I carried out instructions early this morning in a written communication to Herr von Ribbentrop.

¹ No. 247. Sir N. Henderson's communication followed the wording of this telegram.

No. 265

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 12.35 p.m.)

No. 110 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 3123/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

I have telephoned separately¹ the text of the Declaration signed late last night whereby Czecho-Slovakian President placed the destiny of Bohemia and Moravia in the hands of Germany and Herr Hitler accepted the protectorate thereof, while guaranteeing autonomous rights.

I understand that Herr Hitler refused any discussion and the whole proceedings constituted nothing but an ultimatum, under threat of aerial bombardment of Prague. I hear, though I cannot verify the facts, that two German battalions have left by air for Prague.

The situation is thus infinitely worse than the State Secretary led me yesterday to hope² and I have asked French Ambassador to give him a message this morning to the effect that if this is his conception of 'decency' it is not mine. French Ambassador who received instructions last night to ask the intentions of the German Government was informed this morning that Minister for Foreign Affairs had left Berlin. Incidentally M. Alphand,³ who is here and who was to have had a meeting with the German commercial representatives this morning, has postponed it on some pretext or other.

The French Ambassador, who has just been to see me, tells me that he has heard nothing whatever from his Government and is completely in the dark as to their views, as he was also of the German intentions.

May I take it for granted that President of Board of Trade and Secretary of Department of Overseas Trade will not visit Berlin? Whether any further act indicating the displeasure of His Majesty's Government is opportune depends in my opinion on the status to be accorded to Bohemia and Moravia and on future developments.

Repeated to Prague.

¹ See No. 256.

² See No. 235.

³ Director of the Commercial Treaties Department in the French Ministry of Commerce.

No. 266

Minute by Mr. Strang

[C 3157/8/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1939

On Sir A. Cadogan's instructions I telephoned at 1 p.m. to-day to Sir N. Henderson asking him to inform the German Government that in view of the present situation His Majesty's Government felt that the visit of the President of the Board of Trade and Mr. Hudson would be inopportune and that they accordingly felt obliged to postpone it.

Sir N. Henderson said that this was in accordance with his own views.

I said that we would like this message delivered to the German Government before 3 p.m. London time to-day since we wished them to be informed in advance of any statement that might be made in the House of Commons.¹

W. STRANG

¹ The postponement of Mr. Stanley's and Mr. Hudson's visit was announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on March 15. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 438.

No. 267

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Mr. Livingston (Geneva)

Unnumbered¹ Telegraphic [C 3131/92/55]

DANZIG, March 15, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

Addressed to British Consul at Geneva.

Following for Secretary [General], League of Nations from High Commissioner.

High Commissioner has reached Danzig and considers it may be necessary to return to Geneva in order to report verbally, so he thinks it desirable to mention this possibility in communiqué.

¹ This telegram was addressed to H.M. Consul, Geneva, and was repeated as No. 22 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 15 at 2.25 p.m.

No. 268

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 105 Telegraphic [C 3166/15/18]

PARIS, March 15, 1939, 1.55 p.m.

The French General Staff informed the Military Attaché this morning that, although they had no exact news, communications with Prague were [*sic* ? being] interrupted, they had reason to believe that four German columns were entering Bohemia and Moravia this morning, one directed on Prague, one on Pilsen, one on Jihlava and one on Brno. Ostrava had been occupied yesterday. The probable excuse would be that it was necessary to protect isolated German communities in Bohemia from the fury of Czechs.

Colonel Gauché added that this move had been foreseen by the French General Staff even to the date (15th March) ten days ago. His forecast for the immediate future was that Germany would appropriate Moravia and that Bohemia and Slovakia would become German protectorates, the former certainly being occupied by the German troops. As regard Sub-Carpathian Russia the Poles and Hungarians would doubtless try and annex it between them in order to have a common frontier, but it was doubtful whether Germany would allow it, as it was necessary for her to have physical contact with Roumania.

The turn of the last-named country would probably come within three months: the method to be followed would be much the same as in Czecho-

Slovakia, since German and Hungarian minorities existed which could be used to disrupt the State from within.

The above naturally is speculation only but so far the forecasts of the French General Staff on Central Europe have proved fairly accurate.

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague and Bucharest.

No. 269

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 16,¹ 4.30 p.m.)

No. 48 Telegraphic [C 3193/7/12]

WARSAW, March 15, 1939, 3.7 p.m.

My telegram No. 47.²

Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that the Polish Government have recognized the independence of Slovakia and have already appointed a Chargé d'Affaires in Bratislava. They have asked the German Government how they are to interpret their policy in regard to Slovakia.

2. As regards Ruthenia, Hungarian troops are expected to reach the Polish frontier tonight. Neither the Polish Government nor, so far as he knows, the Hungarian Government have approached the German Government in regard to the question of the common frontier but the Polish Ambassador at Berlin reports that it is not looked upon with disfavour there. The Polish and Roumanian Governments are agreed that, in the event of Ruthenia being absorbed by Hungary, Roumania should have the eastern end, including the railway running North and South through Jasina. Polish Government are making every effort in Budapest to secure Hungary's consent to this arrangement.

3. Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that, while Polish frontier guards were being reinforced no special military measures were being taken. He understood that German troop movements were concentrated on entering Slovakia via Morawska-Ostrava with a view to occupying the valley of Waag.

4. As regards the general situation, M. Arciszewski admitted that the Polish Government had been surprised at the rapidity of the developments of the last two days. They had expected that the Czecho-Slovak Government would largely become subservient to the Reich, but they had not thought that Germany would absorb Bohemia and dominate Slovakia with such rapidity. When I suggested that Polish policy regarding Czecho-Slovakia had been at fault ever since the war he found difficulty, under the present circumstances, in denying it. As regards the common frontier he admitted that even if the Reich agreed to it Hungary would probably fall so far under German influence that the common frontier would form no barrier to Germany's further penetration eastward. He stated that the Italian Govern-

¹ This should probably read 'March 15'.

² No. 250.

ment had vaguely yesterday expressed their (? acquiescence)³ in Hungary occupying Ruthenia but had not been prepared to commit themselves to more.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Bucharest.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 270

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 5.0 p.m.)

No. 106 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3136/15/18]

PARIS, March 15, 1939

I met M. Bonnet at lunch with the Minister of Justice.

His Excellency tells me that the French Ambassador asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Berlin this morning for information regarding the Czecho-Slovak crisis. Herr von Weizsäcker replied as follows:—

1. Regarding Ruthenia you should enquire of Budapest for that is the concern of the Hungarians.

2. Regarding Slovakia, the independence of that country has been proclaimed.

3. Regarding Czechia, entire agreement exists between the German and Czech Governments, as you will see from the joint communiqué which is being issued today. The German Ambassador informed M. Bonnet by telephone this morning that he would call on him this afternoon and give him information regarding the march of events.

M. Bonnet maintains his opinion that we cannot intervene in any way in this affair; but he is clearly much disturbed by the unnecessary Nazi brutality and gangster-like methods. He remarked to me repeatedly that Great Britain and France had better continue their rearmament as rapidly and as intensively as possible and that their close union was more than ever essential.

I asked whether he thought Roumania would be the next course of the Nazi menu. He thinks this very likely.

M. Bonnet's impression is, judging from Herr von Weizsäcker's above-mentioned reply to M. Coulondre, that the Germans and Hungarians are working in together.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Bucharest.

No. 271

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15)¹

No. 111 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3137/7/12]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Polish Ambassador who came to see me this evening and who was obviously perturbed by peremptory developments informed me that his Government had

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

already appointed a Minister to Slovakia, presumably with a view to forestalling German protectorate over that province also.

I told him I did not share optimism of his Government and in fact while still at Embassy he received a telephone message from his staff to the effect that it was stated that German troops had been invited to Bratislava by Hlinka guard.

Repeated to Prague and Warsaw.

No. 272

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 6.30 p.m.)*

No. 112 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3138/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Following from Assistant Military Attaché for War Office:—

Following is summary of bulletin issued this afternoon by the Defence Ministry.

German troops are rapidly advancing. This morning Pilsen and Olmütz were occupied.

About 9.15 the first advance guard entered Prague Castle.

German troops entered Brünn Wednesday morning and are rapidly advancing in other sectors preceded by motorised columns. Shortly after 6 o'clock Melnik was occupied.

Yesterday evening army formations and units of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler occupied Mährisch-Ostrau and Witkowitz.

Squadrons of the German air force flew over the German-Czech frontier.

German War Office informed Assistant Military Attaché this evening that everything was proceeding according to programme and that there had been no incidents reported.

No. 273

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 15, 9.20 p.m.)*

No. 113 Telegraphic [C 3167/19/18]

BERLIN, March 15, 1939, 9.8 p.m.

My telegram No. 110.¹

French Ambassador's conversation with State Secretary this morning was unsatisfactory. The latter adopted the line that the request for information as to Germany's intentions was unnecessary in view of the publication of the official communiqué describing the result of Herr Hitler's Hacha interview. As regards the French Ambassador's comment that German action was contrary both to Munich and Franco-German Declaration of December last,

¹ No. 265.

State Secretary replied that the French Government had no cause for complaint since last night's agreement between the two statesmen had been 'freely' reached.

In reply to all enquiries the State Secretary in fact referred the Ambassador to various officially composed communiqués and when the latter observed that the Czech agreement had been extorted by threat of force he retorted that President Hacha had himself admitted that the only means of restoring order and preventing *coup* by adherents of M. Benes was to permit German occupation.

No. 274

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 35 Telegraphic [C 3165/71/21]


BUDAPEST, March 15, 1939, 9.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 32¹ last paragraph.

Prime Minister this evening told Admiral Osborne² that Hungary had obtained Germany's agreement in advance to action in Ruthenia.

Repeated to Warsaw and Berlin.

¹ No. 252.

 ² Admiral C. V. Osborne was on a lecture tour for the British Council.

No. 275

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 23 Telegraphic [C 3171/92/55]

DANZIG, March 15, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

High Commissioner has just informed me that when he stopped in Berlin on his return journey he gained from reliable sources there a strong impression, which has been confirmed in official circles here, that extremely grave developments may take place in Danzig in the almost immediate future. He apprehends occupation of Free City during the coming week-end by troops from East Prussia, hence his desire to return almost at once to Geneva.

2. He understands that Herr Hitler is so incensed with anti-German demonstrations in Poland that he intends to teach Poland a lesson.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 276

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16)

No. 128 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3139/19/18]

PARIS, March 15, 1939

The French press, with practically no distinction, underlines with increasing disquiet the gravity, both of the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia, and of the brutality of Germany's methods. It is recognised that Great Britain and France can take no useful action, and there is no suggestion from Left or

Right of any intervention, diplomatic or otherwise. The general conclusion reached is that Germany has torn the Munich Agreements to shreds, and destroyed the hopes of appeasement; that France and Great Britain must stick closely together, continue and even intensify their rearmament; and make no concessions or show signs of weakness.

There are still two trends of comment. Some newspapers point out that the break-up of Czecho-Slovakia is a proof of how artificial the State was, and several writers, such as Thouvenin in the 'Homme Libre' (pro-Bonnet) take the line that Europe is paying for the mistakes of Versailles. It is the Peace Treaty, he states, not the Munich Agreements, which should be blamed. Munich had indeed allowed certain initial mistakes to be repaired without a world war. Some writers add that Germany may not succeed where the Hapsburgs failed, and that her policy may weaken her in the long run. Those newspapers who opposed the Munich settlement, including the 'Populaire' (Socialist), the 'Peuple' (Trade Union) and 'L'Humanité' (Communist), regard what has happened as the inevitable result of a series of concessions to the dictators.

Bernus, in the 'Journal des Débats' (Right), draws the moral that if any statesmen continue to place the least value on Germany's word, they will be guilty of treason. Co-operation between the democracies, and firmness and determination must be the watchwords. The slightest weakening towards Italy, no less than towards Germany, would be fatal.

The semi-official 'Temps', in its leading article this evening, says that less than six months after Munich, Germany has deliberately overthrown the edifice she had built herself. No international guarantees are called into play where a State collapses from the interior, and resigns itself to dislocation. But it is important to watch the situation in which those nations of Central and Eastern Europe which are still determined to defend their independent existence now find themselves. Meanwhile the silence of Soviet Russia and Italy gives Germany the measure of her victory. Germany, the article concludes, has acted without consulting her Munich partners. It may justly be asked whether it is possible to reconcile such action with the loyal pursuit of a policy of co-operation and consultation, and if the confidence of international opinion in such a policy is not in danger of being destroyed.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

No. 277

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 614 [C 3129/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 15, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on March 14 and asked if His Majesty's Government had any definite news in regard to the Slovak crisis.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan told His Excellency that our latest reports, for

the accuracy of which he could not vouch, indicated that Germany might be contemplating sending S.S. detachments over the frontier tonight. These, in the event of trouble, might have to be supported by troops, and there were reports of certain though not very extensive troop movements. The Ambassador asked if we had any indication of the areas that Germany contemplated occupying. He was told that according to some reports the idea would be to draw a cordon between Slovakia and Moravia, though according to another rumour the Germans were contemplating the occupation of Budweis in Bohemia. There were also stories that even Prague itself might be occupied as a measure of protection for the German population in Iglau.

3. The Ambassador next asked whether His Majesty's Government were contemplating taking any action in the matter. Sir Alexander said that, so far as he knew, they were not thinking of making any *démarche* at this stage. There was probably nothing effective that they could do to prevent the execution of a German plan, if Herr Hitler had determined to carry it out.

4. M. Corbin said that he thought his Government had been considering making a formal enquiry of the German Government as to their intentions, invoking the general understanding at Munich that future difficulties would be treated by way of consultation. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that although of course His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin had been making enquiries on his own initiative, he was not being instructed to make any formal *démarche*. The agreement which the Prime Minister signed with Herr Hitler in September did indeed provide that the two Governments should consult on questions that concerned our two countries, but if we attempted to invoke that agreement on the present occasion, the Germans would doubtless retort that we had no interest whatever in Czecho-Slovakia. So far as he could remember, the German-French Agreement of November [December] last was on similar lines, though the Germans could perhaps hardly make the same retort to the French Government as the latter were presumably still technically bound by their Treaty with Czecho-Slovakia.

5. M. Corbin said that he supposed that His Majesty's Government were under some obligation in view of their promise of a guarantee. To this Sir Alexander replied that it might be held that they were morally under some obligation; it could equally be, however, maintained that they had been released from it by the fact that they had tried to negotiate an international guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia but had failed through no fault of their own. They had always made it plain that they would not contemplate an individual British guarantee of Czecho-Slovakia.

6. His Excellency continued that in any event it was embarrassing for our two Governments to have to watch events of this kind and to confess that we were powerless to influence them. Sir Alexander agreed with M. Corbin, but said that, if we had to acknowledge that we could do nothing to stop German action and were concerned at least to save our prestige as far as might be, it was for consideration whether we should not lose more prestige by attempting to deter Herr Hitler and being flouted by him than by waiting for the event to happen and then formally drawing our conclusions from it.

7. M. Corbin said that, if the Czecho-Slovak State were to be finally broken up, it seemed to him that there might be some advantage in Ruthenia being incorporated in Hungary, thereby giving the latter a frontier with Poland which would constitute a barrier of some sort against German expansion eastward.

8. He added that he had no indication of Italian complicity in this latest move on the part of the German Government, and he had no recent news of the likelihood of any imminent Italian move.

9. Finally M. Corbin said that he was sure that his Government would wish to take no step without previous consultation with His Majesty's Government.

10. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Representatives at Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Prague.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 278

Minute by Sir O. Sargent

[C 3367/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 15, 1939*

The French Ambassador gave me this morning the attached copy of the instructions which were sent yesterday to the French Ambassador in Berlin. In return I showed him the instructions sent to Sir N. Henderson in our telegram No. 49.¹ M. Corbin had no further information to impart either as to the general situation or as to the attitude and intentions of the French Government in the matter.

O. G. SARGENT

¹ No. 247.

ANNEX 1 TO No. 278.

Instructions¹ envoyées par le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères à l'Ambassadeur de France à Berlin

LONDRES, *le 15 mars, 1939*

L'accord de Munich a été jusqu'ici présenté, en Allemagne même, comme un élément capital de la paix en Europe centrale et, d'une façon plus générale, comme une étape décisive dans les rapports de mutuelle confiance entre les principales puissances européennes intéressées au maintien de cette paix; il devait créer entre elles en même temps qu'une base formelle d'entente, une atmosphère de collaboration excluant désormais tout recours à la violence.

En ce qui concerne plus particulièrement la Tchéco-Slovaquie, l'annexe I

¹ The text of these instructions is printed in the French Yellow Book, op. cit., No. 64.

de l'accord de Munich relative à une garantie internationale des nouvelles frontières de l'État tchéco-slovaque établissait entre les quatre signataires, à la faveur d'un règlement définitif, une incontestable solidarité d'intention.

Aussi bien est-ce la portée générale attribuée à l'accord de Munich qui a conduit, dans le domaine des rapports franco-allemands, à la détente marquée par la déclaration du 6 décembre, avec tout ce qu'elle comporte d'incidences sur les plans politique, économique et culturel.

C'est donc avec la plus sérieuse préoccupation que le Gouvernement français se voit amené à suivre l'évolution des événements en Slovaquie. L'attitude qu'adoptera à cette occasion le Gouvernement du Reich doit comporter, en effet, un enchaînement qui éclairera sur bien des points essentiels l'avenir des relations de l'Allemagne avec le reste de l'Europe.

En vous inspirant des considérations qui précèdent, veuillez vous enquérir d'extrême urgence auprès de M. de Ribbentrop de l'interprétation qui, de l'avis des autorités du Reich elles-mêmes, doit être attachée à leur action en Slovaquie. Vous donnerez à cette élucidation le caractère d'une enquête purement informative dont l'importance justifierait, s'il en était besoin, une référence de votre part à la procédure de consultation mutuelle prévue par la déclaration du 6 décembre.

Dans la mesure même où le Gouvernement français a entendu répondre sincèrement à l'orientation nouvelle née des accords de Munich et de la déclaration franco-allemande, on ne peut s'étonner à Berlin de notre souci actuel d'apprécier clairement l'élément de confiance que le Gouvernement allemand entend lui-même ménager dans la justification de cette politique.

ANNEX 2 TO No. 278¹

Projet

L'Ambassadeur de France a l'honneur de saisir le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères du Reich de la protestation formelle élevée par le Gouvernement de la République contre les mesures annoncées par le Comte Welchek. Le Gouvernement français considère qu'il se trouve placé en face d'une violation flagrante de la lettre et de l'esprit des accords conclus à Munich en septembre dernier, accords par lesquels les Quatre Puissances s'étaient engagées à respecter l'intégrité du nouvel État tchéco-slovaque.

Les circonstances qui ont imposé au Gvt. de la République tchéco-slovaque son adhésion ne sauraient consacrer en droit l'état de fait établi par l'accord conclu dans la nuit du 14 au 15 mars. Le Gouvernement français ne peut reconnaître dans ces conditions la situation nouvelle créée en Tchéco-slovaquie par l'action du Reich et formule toutes réserves sur les conséquences qui pourraient en être tirées.

¹ For the final text of the French Note of March 17, of which this is a draft, see No. 396.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)**No. 487 [C 3170/19/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1939

Sir,

The German Ambassador called to see me this afternoon at his own request, in order to convey, on behalf of his Government, a copy of the communiqué¹ published in Berlin this morning after the meeting of Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop with Dr. Hacha and Dr. Chwalkowsky. In handing me this memorandum, Dr. von Dirksen said that he was also charged to say, on behalf of his Government, that they earnestly hoped that the action taken with the concurrence of the representatives of the Czecho-Slovak Republic would lead to a settlement and the re-establishment of order.

2. Speaking unofficially, Dr. von Dirksen said that it might perhaps be helpful to me if he added a few remarks which might give the background of recent events. There had been during the last few days considerable development of disorder in Czecho-Slovakia, German fugitives had been crossing the frontier, and in Brünn and in Iglau there had been assaults upon the Germans by Czech gendarmes and many Germans had been wounded. The German Chargé d'Affaires had drawn attention yesterday to these events and the Czech Foreign Minister had not denied them.

3. German relations indeed had not developed as steadily with the Czech Government during recent months as outwardly might have appeared to be the case. Some people in the Government had honestly wished to be conciliatory and to avoid troubles, but many Czech officials, especially in the lower ranks of the civil and police administration, had acted in very contrary sense. In these quarters there had been considerable survival of the Benes tradition, with the result that great difficulties had been created for the German-speaking population. In his conversation yesterday with the Czech Foreign Minister, the German Chargé d'Affaires had drawn his attention to this long passage of unfavourable events. The former had not denied them, but had said that, if he had had more power, the developments would have been very different.

4. The truth was that events had shown Czecho-Slovakia not to possess the elements of a durable State. The co-operation that had been hoped between Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia had not, in fact, been found possible, with the result that the whole question that it had been sought to settle last autumn had again forced itself upon attention in the shape of a sharp conflict between the Czech Central Government and the Slovak Diet. When this developed, Prague had acted unconstitutionally, and it had been essential for steps to be taken to avert further trouble.

5. I said that I could make no attempt to conceal from the Ambassador how gravely these events were bound to react upon opinion all over the

¹ See No. 256.

world. Whatever might be said upon the actual matters of detail that he had mentioned, and wherever the exact truth might lie, the broad result was not capable of challenge. What had taken place was in flat contradiction with the spirit of the Munich Agreement, which had surely contemplated that, if such questions affecting the whole structure of European confidence were to arise, they would be found capable of settlement by consultation and not by this method of naked application of force. Only the other day after Munich, the German Chancellor had publicly stated that he had no more territorial ambitions, and on the morrow of that declaration the world saw action of exactly opposite kind. The immediate result was that nobody felt the assurances of the German Government to be worth very much, and that everybody asked themselves in what direction the next adventures would be framed. I could well understand Herr Hitler's taste for bloodless victories, but one of these days he would find himself up against something that would not be bloodless; and recent events would certainly have made opinion in many parts of the world feel that this kind of thing was a good deal more probable than they had previously hoped, and they would make their plans accordingly. The German Government must have weighed all these consequences, and the conclusion that everybody in this country and far outside it would draw must be that they had no great desire to establish good relations with this country, that they were prepared to disregard world opinion and were seeking to establish a position in which they could by force dominate Europe and, if possible, the world. At this very moment we had been looking forward to a more promising approach to the settlement of political problems through the treatment of economic difficulties: but, in the circumstances, we had felt it was quite out of the question that the President of the Board of Trade should proceed on his projected visit to Berlin, and accordingly all this prospect of more hopeful developments was once more postponed. From every wider point of view of its effect on European confidence and world feeling the result seemed to me deplorable.

6. To this the Ambassador replied that it must be admitted that Eastern Europe had been very unsettled and that further changes had been inevitable. Western Europe was settled and accordingly there was no need for the anxiety that I had expressed. The Ambassador, however, seemed to speak with little conviction, and his general demeanour was one that suggested that he felt considerable difficulty himself in defending the action taken by his Government.

7. I repeated that in many parts of the world people would inevitably be asking themselves what was the next objective of the German Government. To this His Excellency said that the only danger spots of which he was aware were Memel and Danzig. The position of the German population in the former was undoubtedly difficult, though latterly the Lithuanian Government had shown signs of a desire to secure better treatment for them. In regard to Danzig, the German Government hoped to be able to reach a solution, in consultation with the Polish Government. I would perhaps have observed that the German Government had done everything that they could

to avoid the development of unfriendly feeling in Germany towards Poland, arising out of the recent anti-German incidents in that country.

8. Before he left, I asked the Ambassador what was to be the position in Bohemia and Moravia. He said that he had just received a message on the telephone that Herr Henlein had been appointed Statthalter of Bohemia, which would, in accordance with the communiqué issued, enjoy the measure of autonomy there foreshadowed. By this he supposed to be implied that the population would not serve in the German army and would generally enjoy rights of self-government and national development. Slovakia would, he presumed, enjoy independence, assisted economically and otherwise by Germany.

9. As I took leave of the Ambassador, I said once again how greatly we must deplore the methods that had been employed by the German Government to handle these latest developments, and that I should be less than frank if I left him or his Government under any misconception as to the effect that the action of his Government must have upon feeling in this country.

10. I told the Ambassador that there had been one or two other matters on which I had wished to speak to him, but these I must reserve for another interview. I had in mind the complaints that it is proposed to make officially in regard to the undesirable activities of a number [*sic* ? member] of the German Embassy and the German editor of a newspaper enjoying circulation in this country.²

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² Complaints had been received in the Foreign Office of anti-British propaganda activities by a member of the German Embassy staff and of the publication of an offensive article on the British troops in Palestine in the 'Deutsche Zeitung in Grossbritannien', a newspaper edited by a certain Dr. Rösel, London correspondent of the 'Essener National Zeitung', and circulated amongst the German community in Great Britain. In a later interview, on March 18, Lord Halifax drew Dr. von Dirksen's attention to these activities, and requested him to administer a severe warning to the individuals concerned. See also Volume V of this Series.

No. 280

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 619 [C 3183/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 15, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this evening. M. Corbin began by asking me whether we had it in mind to make any official move in Berlin in regard to recent events. I told the Ambassador that we had not contemplated doing anything further in this sense at the present time, not seeing what useful purpose would be immediately served. We had thought that the best action we could take at the moment was that which had been announced in

Parliament this afternoon, namely, the postponement of the contemplated visit of the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of Overseas Trade. I had immediately before seeing His Excellency had an interview with the German Ambassador,¹ to whom I had spoken very frankly, and I recounted to M. Corbin the general lines on which our conversation had proceeded. In regard to the particular question the Ambassador had asked me, I asked him whether he thought the French Government would contemplate making any such *démarche* as he had suggested. M. Corbin told me that he had no instructions at present from his Government and had only come to enquire our general attitude. I accordingly assured M. Corbin that, should we decide to take any such action as he had referred to, I would let him know, and I had no doubt the French Government would similarly keep us informed should they decide to do anything of the kind.

2. The Ambassador then proceeded to make some obvious comments upon the recent action of the German Government, with which I concurred, adding that the one compensating advantage that I saw was that it had brought to a natural end the somewhat embarrassing commitment of a guarantee, in which we and the French had both been involved. With this M. Corbin agreed, and proceeded to say that the principal and immediate point of interest now with the French Government was likely to be the reactions of these events upon the policy of Italy. It was impossible that Signor Mussolini could be very pleased at what had occurred, and it must increase the temptation upon him to try and get something to redress the balance between the Axis partners. The Italian people would surely think it very strange if all the benefits of the partnership continued to go one way.

3. I told the Ambassador that these reflections had also occurred to me. For what it was worth, we had recently had a despatch from Lord Perth² reporting the impressions severally gained in different parts of the country by members of his staff. These impressions had all seemed to point to the fact that at present there were no special preparations of a warlike kind under way in Italy. If I recollect rightly, M. Corbin said that the French Government had no very positive information in any different sense, but said that, although nothing much might be happening in the way of military preparations, the press campaign continued unabated. Only a few days ago a French opera due to be given at Naples had been cancelled only one hour before the performance was to begin. Such a matter was, of course, of no importance, but was symptomatic of the ill-feeling which it was intended to exhibit.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See No. 279.

² See No. 361.

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)

No. 324 [C 3237/281/17]

PARIS, March 15, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to Your Lordship's telegram No. 76 Saving¹ of the 13th March regarding the forthcoming Anglo-French Staff conversations, I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that I duly instructed my Military Attaché to make a communication to General Gamelin in the sense of paragraphs 3-8 of that telegram.

2. Colonel Fraser saw General Gamelin on the afternoon of the 14th March and handed to him a memorandum on the lines indicated. A copy of this memorandum is enclosed, herein.² General Gamelin expressed his complete agreement with its terms and promised that a written answer would be sent to Colonel Fraser as soon as possible.

3. I thought it well, as a matter of courtesy, to let the Ministry of Foreign Affairs know that instructions had been received for my Military Attaché to put himself in touch with the French General Staff in regard to the programme now to be followed. His Majesty's Minister has accordingly informed the Political Director verbally to this effect.

I have, &c.,

ERIC PHIPPS

P.S. *March 16.* I enclose a copy of the reply which Colonel Fraser has received from General Gamelin.

E. P.

¹ No. 228.

² Not printed. As stated above the memorandum followed the lines of paragraphs 3-8 of No. 228.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 281

PARIS, le 15 mars 1939

Le Gouvernement français donne au Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique son accord sur tous les points visés par la Note de l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne en date du 14 mars et en particulier sur l'opportunité de ne donner connaissance des plans mutuels qu'aux États-Majors.

Après étude du Memorandum britannique et remise à l'Attaché Militaire de Grande-Bretagne à Paris du Memorandum français, le Général Chef d'État-Major Général de la Défense Nationale proposera la date à laquelle pourraient prendre contact à Londres les États-Majors français et britannique.

No. 282

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 11.30 a.m.)

No. 91 Telegraphic [C 3191/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939, 10.35 a.m.

My Air Attaché witnessed arrival of first German troops (mechanized units) in centre of Prague at 9.30 a.m. today.¹ The crowds, who seemed to be taken by surprise, and the police behaved well. Town generally seems quiet. Tonight there will be a curfew at 9 o'clock.

At 1.30 p.m. Air Attaché saw about 1,000 (presumably motor (? column)²) infantry on the march near Ministry of War. Vehicles so far seen include motor-cycles, motor-cycle combinations and 4 and 8-wheeled armoured cars, troop-carrying lorries, old type anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft light automatic guns and 18 pounders (or bigger) apparently of an old type.

Liaison officer at Ministry of War (which was guarded by German troops) informed him that Germans were seeking accommodation for 10,000 men in Prague. They had not taken over authority at War Office but had done so in several public buildings and at police headquarters.

According to an unofficial and sometimes reliable source 14 German divisions have been put into Bohemia and Moravia and 40 more in Germany are being made ready for all eventualities.

Please inform War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ This telegram was evidently drafted on March 15.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 283

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 16, 2.20 p.m.)*

No. 115 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3209/19/18]

BERLIN, March 16, 1939

Following is text of a 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' communiqué dated March 15 and published in this morning's press.

'In consequence of the entry of the German troops into Bohemia and Moravia, the executive power has been conferred as from to-day, order by the Führer, upon Commander-in-Chief of the Army, in the territories under the protection of the German defence forces.

'Executive power is exercised in his name.

'In Bohemia by the Commander-in-Chief of the Third Army Group, General Blaskowitz; in Moravia by the Commander-in-Chief of the Fifth Army Group, General List.

'Reichskommissar and Gauleiter Konrad Henlein has been attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the Third Army Group and Reichskommissar and

Gauleiter Bürckel has been attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the Fifth Army Group to take charge of all questions connected with the civil administration.

'The Commander-in-Chief of the Army will issue an official gazette for Bohemia and Moravia (*Verordnungsblatt für Böhmen und Mähren*) for the publication of legal regulations in the territories placed under the protection of the German defence forces, which will appear simultaneously in the German and Czech languages. This official gazette can until further notice be obtained from the Reich publishing office (*Reichsverlagsamt*).'

No. 284

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 16, 2.25 p.m.)*

No. 116 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3210/19/18]

BERLIN, March 16, 1939

Following is the text of a proclamation dated March 15 by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army in Bohemia and Moravia to the population:

'By the will of the Führer and Supreme Commander of the German defence forces, German troops have entered your country with the order to maintain calm and order and to take over the protection of the population. In the territories placed under the protection of the German troops the executive power has been conferred upon me and the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army Group[s]. The entire public administration will continue to operate unless laws to the contrary are issued. This applies also to the police forces, the post office and railway authorities and to the public services. The entire economic life will continue uninterruptedly. Every person shall remain at his post and proceed with his work. The interruption of work will be regarded as sabotage.

'The order of the German Military Authorities must be followed implicitly. Everyone should act according to the orders issued which serve the common good and the good of the individual.'

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMY,
VON BRAUCHITSCH

No. 285

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 118 Telegraphic: by wireless [C 3211/19/18]

BERLIN, March 16, 1939

Announcement has appeared in the press that all travel communications to and from the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia now under German protection has [*sic*] been until further notice prohibited.

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 3.30 p.m.)

No. 39 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3208/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 16, 1939

The Prime Minister today in Parliament, after referring to the recent frontier incidents and the collapse of the Czecho-Slovak State, said that anarchy in Ruthenia had made it necessary in the interests of the Hungarian and Ruthenian peoples to take certain military and political steps.

The Ruthenian people and their leader had turned yesterday to Hungary with the request that in order to restore safety of life and property the Hungarian army should occupy Ruthenia. The Hungarian Government in response to these requests were occupying the whole of Ruthenia. Action of the Hungarian army was unopposed and it was hoped to occupy Ruthenia and restore order without the loss of blood.

Count Teleki added that the advance of the Hungarian army does not threaten any territories bordering on Ruthenia. He concluded: 'This land, the vital interests of which attach it to Hungary and which belonged to the mother country for one thousand years, we now reattach, with its autonomy that is founded on ancient rights to Hungary.'

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 3254/3/12]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 16, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

Following for Mr. Stopford.¹

1. The Prime Minister made the following references to the Czech loan and the refugee problem in his speech in the House of Commons yesterday.²

2. 'In the second place, I think the House would like to know the position as regards the financial assistance to the former Government of Czecho-Slovakia authorised by the Act of Parliament passed last month. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the present position is as follows. Section 1 of the Act provides that the Treasury shall repay to the Bank of England £10,000,000 which has been placed at the disposal of the National Bank of Czecho-Slovakia. That has been done. The amount that has been withdrawn by Czecho-Slovakia since the advance was first made available last October is £3,250,000, and the balance of £6,750,000 remains in the Bank of England. As originally devised between ourselves and the French Government and the former Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*] Government it included the issue by the last-named Government of a loan on the London market by means of which the assistance given to that Government so far as it took the form of loan, would

¹ Mr. R. J. Stopford was British liaison officer in Prague in connexion with the disbursement of the British loan to Czecho-Slovakia, and with the refugee problem.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 437-8.

be repaid. In the new circumstances, when it appears that the Government of Czecho-Slovakia has ceased to exist and the territory for which that Government was formerly responsible has been divided, it would seem impossible at present to say how the scheme can be carried through, and steps have been taken to request the Bank of England to make no further payments out of the balance until the situation has been cleared up and a definite conclusion reached. I may say that I have no reason to suppose that the £3,250,000 already drawn has been applied other than in accordance with the arrangements made by us and that a substantial proportion of the sum has been directly devoted to the assistance of refugees.'

3. The Chancellor of Exchequer stated later in the course of the debate that the embargo on further drawings on the loan did not mean that His Majesty's Government wished to abandon any efforts they could make to assist refugees. The arrangements for their emigration had been proceeding smoothly during recent weeks and by the middle of February 5,500 had already emigrated and others had done so since. The conclusion of the arrangements for Czech financial assistance had enabled plans for a further emigration of refugees to be discussed. Mr. Stopford had been very active in the matter. These arrangements included the departure of large numbers of refugees to different countries including a further batch of several hundreds to the United Kingdom. The Chancellor could not say what the effect of recent events would be on these arrangements, but His Majesty's Minister at Prague had been instructed to do everything in his power to accelerate the departure of refugees who had already got United Kingdom visas and the granting of visas to persons, whose number was estimated at about 500, who were either waiting for visas or about to get them. His Majesty's Government took the view that the money, a very substantial proportion of the whole, which was earmarked expressly for assisting refugees, should be available for that purpose but adequate security to provide that it was so used must be taken before any further transmission of money was resumed.³

³ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 548-9.

No. 288

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 5.0 p.m.)

No. 117 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3213/19/18]

BERLIN, March 16, 1939

Comment on Germany's . . .¹ in Czecho-Slovakia seems superfluous. The utter cynicism and immorality of the whole performance defies description. Nazism has definitely crossed the rubicon of purity of race and German unity and answer to this form of Pan-Germanism can only in the end be Pan-Slavism. It is difficult to believe that the fate of the Czechs will not induce the remaining Slav branches to take counsel together.

However reprehensible in form and however unwelcome in fact, the in-

¹ The text is here uncertain.

corporation of Austrians and Sudeten Germans in the Reich was in principle not an unnatural development, was not ignoble aspiration for Germans and was not even ethically immoral. Both Ostmark and Sudetenland seem [*sic*] inhabited by a population almost entirely German living on frontiers of Germany and their incorporation was in conformity with rights of self-determination.

The annexation of Bohemia and Moravia is on a completely different plane and cannot be justified on any grounds which weakened opposition to incorporation of Austria and Sudetenland. It is entirely contrary to right of self-determination and utterly immoral. It constitutes a wrong which will soon call for redress and though it may have afforded Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop a facile triumph it would be sad not to believe that in the end it will prove a costly error. It is to be hoped that Italy no less than Poland, Hungary, Roumania and Yugoslavia will reconsider their positions and if they are not extremely foolish combine against a common menace.

His Majesty's Government will doubtless consider what attitude to adopt towards a Government which has shown itself incapable of observing an agreement not six months old and which is apparently set on domination by force of the whole of the Danube basin.

No. 289

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 5.10 p.m.)

No. 98 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3218/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939

A 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' message published in this morning's Press states that executive power in Bohemia and Moravia has been entrusted to the Commander of the Army. In Bohemia General Blaskowitz and in Moravia General List will be in command. Herr Konrad Henlein has been attached to General Blaskowitz and Herr Bürckel to General List for all civil questions.

General Blaskowitz issued a decree yesterday announcing the appointment of Herr Henlein as head of the Civil Administration. The whole public administration, including Police, Posts and Railways were summoned to continue their activity as were those engaged in economic life, where everyone must remain at his post and continue his work.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 290

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 5.15 p.m.)

No. 99 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3219/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939

Herr Hitler arrived at Prague at 7.15 yesterday evening accompanied by General Keitel, Herr von Ribbentrop, Lieutenant-General Stülpnagel,

Herr von Lammers, Herr Himmler, Herr Dietrich and Herr Stuckart. Dr. Frick is expected to arrive today to deal with questions of constitutional law.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 291

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 5.17 p.m.)

No. 100 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3220/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939

On the morning of March 15 representatives of various Czech patriotic organizations, including the Fascist Association and all the working classes, the farmers and public employees, met at the Prague Parliament, where they decided on the creation of a Czech National Committee. This Committee has been authorised by the competent German authorities to co-operate with the German Military Administration. The list of the Committee published in this morning's Press consists of twenty-five names, headed by General Gajda. The remainder are mostly unknown to me.

The Committee issued yesterday an appeal to the Czech nation recalling their historic association with the German people in the Holy Roman Empire and declaring that now that Hitler's Germany had thrown off the shameful yoke of Versailles the way was clear for the resumption of the fruitful co-operation between the two nations which offered the Czech people a happy future.

General Gajda has also issued a proclamation appealing to all sections of the community to co-operate and to group themselves under his leadership.

No. 292

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 104 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3224/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939

The British Consul at Bratislava reports that Dr. Tiso has requested Herr Hitler to assume the protectorate over Slovakia.

No. 293

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 24 Telegraphic [C 3278/92/55]

DANZIG, March 16, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 23.¹

Polish Commissioner generally recognises the possibility but definitely discounts probability of an impending German military occupation of Danzig.

¹ No. 275.

2. High Commissioner still seems profoundly impressed by warning that he received in Berlin but expresses opinion today that the situation here seems less tense than yesterday. He attributes this to a sudden change in German plans and is accordingly disposed to defer for a while his return to Geneva.

3. I incline to agree with Polish Commissioner generally although in view of Polish optimism and the fact that High Commissioner has sometimes been correct in his forecasts based on information derived from outside sources, I do not feel so positive.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 294

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 39 Telegraphic [C 3272/71/21]

BUCHAREST, March 16, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

The Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the Hungarian Minister today that the frontier troops had been strengthened. Roumanian Government had no intention of taking any action to embarrass the Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia provided that the Roumanian interests are not prejudiced and they begged that Hungarian troops should not cross a line west of Sighet, in the neighbourhood of which there are villages containing some twenty thousand Roumanians. The Minister for Foreign Affairs added that Volosin² and members of his Government had taken refuge in Roumania and invited Roumanian troops to occupy Ruthenia. Volosin had been told that his request could not be entertained and that the Roumanian Government regarded him as a political refugee enjoying no official status.

Finally the Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed his gratification at the highly friendly tone of the recent article in the 'Pester Lloyd'.

Repeated to Budapest.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported the reinforcement of Roumanian troops in certain areas.

² Mgr. Volosin was Prime Minister of Ruthenia.

No. 295

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 17, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 187 Telegraphic [C 3301/19/18]

ROME, March 16, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs informed Counsellor this afternoon that yesterday and today's events in Czecho-Slovakia were first the outward and visible outcome of what had really happened last September. It had come as no surprise to the Italian Government. Counsellor said he pre-

sumed that Hungarian action in invading Ruthenia was taken with approval of the Axis Powers and the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that it certainly was.

Hungarian Counsellor whom Counsellor met at Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Hungary hoped to have all Ruthenia by this evening; that the Italians and Poles were pleased at development of events and that Hungary and Poland were delighted that they would at last have a common frontier. In reply to question he said he was not quite so sure that Germany approved of Hungarian action, but he thought so. In this connexion, Count Ciano's observation to Counsellor last week—see my telegram No. 170¹—regarding Italian attitude to joint Polish-Hungarian frontier, is interesting as it shows perhaps that at that moment Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs thought the question of common frontier was no longer a practical consideration.

French Embassy state that they hear from good sources that it is thought in Italian Government circles that the Italian Government have again been 'rushed' by Germany and that proclamation of protectorate over Slovakia as well as Bohemia and Moravia is a surprise. French Counsellor says that they had learnt from a Fascist source that Germany was even planning a future drive in Yugoslavia.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

¹ No. 192.

No. 296

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)

No. 55 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3380/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 16, 1939

Berlin telegram No. 104.¹ Paragraph 3.

According to such evidence as has reached this Legation Herr Hitler's claim that his compatriots here were subjected to 'an intolerable reign of terror' is a cynical perversion of the truth.

2. An official Czech communiqué published on March 14 admitted that incidents had taken place in Bohemia and Moravia on March 12 hinting that *agents provocateurs* were at work (my telegram No. 70²). The heroes memorial celebrations provided the German minority with just the occasion needed if they in fact wanted to create trouble. There are no plausible grounds for supposing that Czechs themselves had any incentive to provoke incidents and simultaneous outbreak of disturbances in many widely separated localities and announcement in the German wireless indicated that German minority was acting to a 'mot d'ordre' and that resort to the tactics of September last were being repeated.

3. In Prague itself such disorders as occurred on Tuesday evening were clearly provoked by Germans, the Czech police acting with great restraint

¹ No. 257.

² Not printed.

towards them and loud speakers being erected in the main thoroughfares to counsel the people to remain calm and not to let themselves be provoked (my telegram No. 70).

No. 297

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 96 [C 3185/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 16, 1939

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister called at this Department on the 14th March to discuss the Czecho-Slovak situation. He said that the break-up of Czecho-Slovakia, brought about obviously by the intervention of Germany, was bound to alarm all the remaining States of Central Europe. The process by which Germany had induced Slovakia to declare its independence could be applied equally in other countries which had not got a homogeneous population. For instance, it might be applied in the case of Croatia to induce the Croats to break away from Yugoslavia, and, in particular, to induce Transylvania to break away from Roumania.

2. Speaking, as he said, privately and not as the Roumanian Minister, M. Tilea expressed the earnest hope that His Majesty's Government would not tacitly acquiesce in Germany's successful manoeuvre. He realised that we could not take any action to prevent it or undo it, but if we made no gesture whatsoever the effect would be disastrous on our prestige throughout Central Europe and the Balkans, just at a time when it was beginning to recover from the blow dealt to it at Munich. Still speaking personally, he wished to suggest the action which he thought His Majesty's Government ought to take.

3. On the negative side we ought at once to cancel the visit of Mr. Stanley and Mr. Hudson to Berlin. He attached particular importance to this, since a visit by the President of the Board of Trade to Berlin immediately after the successful disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia would be interpreted in Central and South-Eastern Europe as a renunciation by Great Britain of their determination, as stated by Mr. Hudson, to maintain their commercial interests in that part of Europe.

4. The second negative gesture which he proposed was that His Majesty's Government should postpone the recognition of Slovakia as an independent State.

5. He also advocated two positive gestures. First, His Majesty's Government should at once announce the despatch of their commercial mission to Roumania, which was at present being kept secret, and proceed to send it out as soon as possible. Secondly, they should raise their Legations in Roumania, Yugoslavia and Greece to Embassies, even if this entailed doing the same in the Netherlands.

6. M. Tilea was told that his suggestions would be considered, but that, naturally, no opinion could be expressed at the present moment with regard to any of them. He was, however, reminded of the manifold difficulties which

stood in the way of raising His Majesty's Legation in Bucharest to an Embassy, and doubts were also expressed to him whether such a gesture would really have anything more than a fleeting effect, and whether it would not, in fact, be forgotten after a few weeks. In answer, M. Tilea countered this by saying that the creation of an Embassy would have a very real and lasting effect on King Carol, who attached a sentimental and personal importance to this Embassy question.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 298

Minute by Sir O. Sargent

[C 3857/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 16, 1939*

The Roumanian Minister came to see me this afternoon to speak about the new situation created in Central Europe by the disappearance of Czecho-Slovakia. His Government, from secret and other sources, had good reason to believe that within the next few months the German Government would reduce Hungary to vassalage and then proceed to disintegrate Roumania in the same way as they had disintegrated Czecho-Slovakia, with the ultimate object of establishing a German protectorate over the whole country. Although on the present occasion, as M. Tilea was careful to point out, he was speaking entirely personally, he was sure that his Government would want to know definitely how far they could count upon Great Britain in the event of their having in the near future to face and resist—as they certainly would—a German threat of this kind.

The German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia had dealt a most serious blow to Roumania's rearmament. The Roumanian Government had recently concluded a contract with the Czecho-Slovak Government whereby they were to take over, lock, stock and barrel, the whole equipment of 4 divisions. Some of this material has been delivered, but the greater part is still in Czecho-Slovakia and will now, of course, fall into the hands of the Germans. Furthermore, the Roumanian Government had large outstanding contracts with Skoda and other factories whose names I did not catch, and naturally these contracts will now be cancelled.

In these circumstances it was vital that the Roumanian Government should obtain without loss of time the armaments to replace those which they had calculated to obtain from Czecho-Slovakia.

Would His Majesty's Government be prepared to do for Roumania what they had done for Turkey, and give her a loan of, say, £10 million, which the Roumanian Government would be free to use for the purchase of war material primarily from the United Kingdom, but generally from any country or countries where the actual material required was to be found? He mentioned in particular Belgium and the United States.

He proposed to ask to see the Secretary of State within the next few days, but would prefer not to put forward any official proposals or requests on behalf of his Government at this stage. It was for this reason that he had chosen in the first instance to outline to me unofficially the present situation in Roumania and Roumania's immediate requirements.

I told him that his proposals would raise questions of high policy and, incidentally, that a loan such as he suggested would require legislation. I would, of course, report what he had said to the Secretary of State, but I did not actually promise him any answer.

O. G. SARGENT

No. 299

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)

No. 100 [N 1563/30/59]

RIGA, March 16, 1939

His Majesty's Minister at Riga presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit¹ to him a copy of Kovno despatch No. 38 of March 13 recording a conversation with the Lithuanian Prime Minister regarding the future of Memel.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 299

Mr. Preston to Mr. Orde

No. 38

KOVNO, March 13, 1939

Sir,

To-day I had an interview with the Prime Minister who, in the absence, at Rome, of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, is at present in charge of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

2. M. Mironas opened the interview by stating that my visit was most timely; in fact he was just on the point of inviting me to call upon him as he had received some rather alarming news from Berlin. His Excellency then related to me reports from Berlin about Memel, the gist of which I gave in my telegram² of to-day's date.

3. M. Mironas seemed genuinely alarmed and said that even were allowances to be made for exaggeration, of which the Poles were frequently guilty, when discussing Nazi 'Drang nach Osten' activities, his Government could not ignore the danger of a German *coup* at Memel. He promised to keep me informed of any fresh developments and, in reply to my enquiry whether he had heard recently of any troop movements in East Prussia, he said that the Lithuanian staff had no knowledge of any. Indeed, he did not think they would be necessary, as the 'Anschluss' could be brought about merely by the President of the new Memel Directorate announcing it at the forthcoming meeting of the new Chamber.

¹ See No. 430, note 1.

² Not printed.

4. I next asked His Excellency if, in the event of an 'Anschluss' at Memel becoming a *fait accompli*, he anticipated any unpleasant internal reactions in Lithuania major. M. Mironas replied that, whilst there was no saying what might happen, he felt confident that with the army behind them his Government would have the situation well in hand. It was true that the opposition were constantly blaming the Government for weakness at Memel; but, after all, what was Lithuania, a tiny and weak state, to do against Germany except to try and ward her off as long as possible?

5. I availed myself of the opportunity to ask His Excellency whether there was any truth in a report, which I had heard when at Riga, to the effect that M. Litvinoff had recently expressed to the Lithuanian Minister at Moscow his displeasure at Lithuania's 'present policy towards Germany' and that, 'acting on the precedent of her relations with Hungary, Soviet Russia might withdraw her diplomatic mission from Kovno'. M. Mironas replied, without hesitation, that this was obviously a 'canard'. On the contrary, M. Posdniakoff, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires at Kovno, with whom he had recently had a long talk, had said that he fully realised that the Lithuanian Government had no alternative but to continue her endeavours in placating Germany. It was true that the Soviet Government had failed to appoint a new Minister in place of M. Krapivineff; but His Excellency attributed this to the fact that the Soviet Government probably found it difficult to produce suitable people for Ministerial posts abroad. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister continued, it was not always possible to reconcile the expressions of goodwill of M. Posdniakoff with the activities in Lithuania of his Government's agents, the communists, who had recently been giving quite a lot of trouble. In fact the greater Lithuania's difficulties at Memel the more *soit-disant* friends—like the Poles—seemed anxious to proffer their unwelcome services; and the pressure on his distracted little country increased from all sides; the Russians worked through their communist agents; the Poles through the official diplomatic channel and the Germans through the Memellanders at Memel and the Voldemaras nationalists in Lithuania major.

6. Reverting to the subject of German-Lithuanian relations, the Prime Minister said that it seemed to him that the German Government were bent on utilising, to the utmost, their 'nuisance-value' in Eastern Europe. Referring to the memorandum (vide my despatch No. 36² of to-day's date) of the 'Kulturverband' of the Lithuanians of German origin in Lithuania major, His Excellency said there was absolutely no justification for their claims for the opening of new schools. In the Suvalkai district, particularly around Vilkaviskis, the population of German origin were distributed in the proportion of fifty to fifty amongst Lithuanians, in a manner very similar to that of the Czechs and the Germans in the Sudetenland; moreover, they were scattered over a large area and, were schools to be opened in the centres, many of the children would have to walk 15 kilometres, and more, to attend them.

7. I next drew His Excellency's attention to the pronounced increase

² Not printed.

recently in the volume of trade between Lithuania and Germany and a corresponding decrease of his country's trade with the United Kingdom. His Excellency replied that this tendency had by no means escaped his notice; that Lithuania greatly valued her trade relations with the United Kingdom—more in fact than with any other country—and that steps would soon be taken to correct the unfortunate trend to which I had referred.

8. Finally we made a *tour d'horizon*, and His Excellency reminded me of the prognostications he had made on the 18th February during the supper party at the opening of the Chamber of Commerce. The gist of what M. Mironas said on that occasion was that if Germany were baulked by the Democracies in the West she might vent her wrath on her small neighbours in South Eastern and North Eastern Europe, which countries would have to pay the bill. They were already paying it, His Excellency concluded with a forced smile.

I have, &c.,
THOMAS H. PRESTON

No. 300

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17, 3.20 p.m.)

No. 111 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3315/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 17, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava reported March 15 that German troops had reached Malacky, 35 kilometres north-west of Bratislava, by midday that day and Trencin by the evening. He believed their object to be to secure Slovakia's southern and eastern frontier. Bratislava itself had not been occupied. Certain classes of reservists and members of the Hlinka guard had been called up in eastern Slovakia.

His Majesty's Consul also reports an interview given by leader of Hungarian minority welcoming independence of Slovakia and offering his co-operation.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Budapest.

No. 301

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)¹

No. 112 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3316/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 17, 1939

The following is a summary of a decree² issued yesterday by Herr Hitler to regulate the constitutional position of Bohemia and Moravia.

Full translation follows by air mail.³

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

² Sir N. Henderson had telephoned a short summary of this decree at 5.45 p.m. on March 16.

³ Not printed.

The preamble reads that force and ignorance had excluded the Bohemian and Moravian Provinces from their historic position within the vital area of the German peoples. The artificial structure of Czecho-Slovakia had formed a centre of constant unrest which had eventually become a monstrous threat to European peace. Germany as the Power most closely interested had therefore determined on the grounds of self-preservation to intervene to restore the basis of Central European order.

Article 1 lays down that the portions of the former Czecho-Slovak Republic occupied by German troops in March 1939 will now be part of the territory of the German Reich and form the 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia'.

Article 2 provides that the German inhabitants of the Protectorate will become German nationals and that the German racial legislation will therefore apply to them. The other inhabitants of Bohemia and Moravia will be nationals of the Protectorate.

Article 3 says that the Protectorate is autonomous and self-administrative. The head of the Administration will enjoy the right of a head of State and must have the confidence of the German Chancellor (Article 4). The latter will nominate a 'Reichprotector in Bohemia and Moravia' to look after the interests of the Reich. The 'Reichprotector' will have wide powers of supervision over the actions of the autonomous Administration of the Protectorate (Article 5). The Reich will take over the foreign relations of the Protectorate, the latter being represented in Berlin by a Minister (Article 6).

Article 7 lays down that the Reich grants the Protectorate military protection and will maintain garrisons in the Protectorate.

The Protectorate will form part of the customs area of the Reich (Article 9). Both the Czech crown and the German mark will be legal tender (Article 10).

Article 11 gives the Reich power to issue laws for the Protectorate, to take over branches of administration and to take the necessary measures for the maintenance of order. The legislation at present in force in the Protectorate will remain generally valid (Article 12).

No. 302

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)¹

No. 113 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3307/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 17, 1939

My telegram No. 104.²

This morning's press publishes an exchange of telegrams between Mgr. Tiso and Herr Hitler.

Mgr. Tiso's telegram requested the Führer to take over the protection of the Slovak State to which Herr Hitler replied in the affirmative.

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

² No. 292.

No. 303

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)*¹

No. 117 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3317/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 17, 1939

In a broadcast statement yesterday Dr. Hacha, President of the Republic, said that at the time of the creation of the Czecho-Slovak state he had already doubted whether there were the necessary and internal guarantees for its existence. It has now been shown that what the Czecho-Slovaks had considered as a permanent solution was only a short episode in their national history.

He said that when he saw what was approaching he decided in agreement with his Government to request Herr Hitler to receive him.

After a long discussion with Herr Hitler he determined to declare that he confidently placed the fate of the Czech nation and state in the hands of the Führer.

In return he had obtained the promise that the Czech people's individuality and the independent development of its national life would be safeguarded. This promise has been fulfilled by Herr Hitler's decree over the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

After a reference to the historic ties between Bohemia and the German Reich, Dr. Hacha said Herr Hitler had promised to afford his support if the conditions of Czech national life should necessitate it. He was confident that the nation would in the new conditions achieve a successful existence. The nation must be united as never before and he was therefore determined to take rapid steps to create the complete unity of all classes.

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

No. 304

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 44 Telegraphic [C 3360/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 17, 1939, 5.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 42.¹

I am reliably informed that the Prime Minister addressing Hungarian press this morning said he was most optimistic that there would be no opposition to Hungarian annexation of Ruthenia. He had added that he was well aware of the strong anti-German feeling prevalent in Hungary but the press must do everything to damp this down.

My Roumanian colleague tells me confidentially that the German Minister

¹ Not printed.

told him that there would be no difficulties about Hungary taking over Ruthenia.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 305

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 46 Telegraphic [C 3333/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 17, 1939, 6.52 p.m.

My telegram No. 44.¹

In the course of an informal talk my German colleague confirmed to me that Germany was disinterested in Ruthenia. He gave me to understand that with the completely new situation that had arisen there through Slovakian declaration of independence, Hungary had been given a free hand.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Bucharest.

¹ No. 304.

No. 306

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 35 Telegraphic [C 2931/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 17, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 43.¹

I approve Counsellor's language. You may, if you think fit, intimate to Colonel Beck that I am anxious to discuss with him the international situation in its general aspects, matters of common interest to our two countries, and Danzig. I shall naturally be ready to hear his views on questions of emigration and raw materials to which I know the Polish Government attach great importance. I am bound to maintain my view that the discussion of the colonial question as it is commonly interpreted would be inappropriate and the knowledge that it had been discussed would be calculated especially at this juncture to disturb and mislead public opinion in England. It was with the intention of not causing Colonel Beck any disappointment in this respect that I sent him my previous message.

2. For your own information the Jewish question is no doubt one which will have to be included and I am prepared to discuss it as sympathetically as possible but I am doubtful whether any concrete result can emerge from the discussion as I see little prospect of His Majesty's Government being able to make material contribution to the solution of the Polish and Roumanian difficulties.

¹ No. 196.

No. 307

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 17, 8.50 p.m.)

No. 41 Telegraphic [C 3359/71/21]

BUCHAREST, March 17, 1939, 8.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 39.¹

Roumanians have indications that Hungarian intention is to occupy the whole of Ruthenia and then offer to discuss means of safeguarding Roumanian interests. Roumanians are averse to this for reason that any territorial discussion would involve obvious dangers. They appear to be receiving urgent appeals from Roumanian villagers who allege that they are in danger of starvation.

I have no reasons to believe that Roumanians intend to enter Ruthenia but a friendly representation from (? the Poles)² to Hungarians would perhaps diminish the risk of Roumanian-Hungarian incident.

Repeated to Budapest and Warsaw.

¹ No. 294.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 308

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 68 Telegraphic [C 3318/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 17, 1939, 8.50 p.m.

Please inform German Government that His Majesty's Government desire to make it plain to them that they cannot but regard the events of the past few days as a complete repudiation of the Munich Agreement and a denial of the spirit in which the negotiators of that Agreement bound themselves to co-operate for a peaceful settlement.

His Majesty's Government must also take this occasion to protest against the changes effected in Czecho-Slovakia by German military action, which are in their view devoid of any basis of legality.¹

¹ Sir N. Henderson delivered this message in the form of a written communication in the afternoon of March 18. See No. 401. In the evening of March 17 the Prime Minister spoke at the annual meeting of the Birmingham Unionist Association. He referred in strong terms to Herr Hitler's violation of the Munich Agreement, and asked: 'Is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new? Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?'

At 1.45 p.m. on March 17 the Foreign Office recalled Sir N. Henderson (by telegram) to London to report. Sir N. Henderson left Berlin on March 18 after carrying out the instructions in No. 308. See also No. 417, note 1.

CHAPTER IV

Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards Italian claims against France (January 20— April 2, 1939)

No. 309

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 23)

No. 46 [R 547/7/22]

ROME, January 20, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that in the course of a conversation on the 16th January on commercial matters M. Helfand, Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, gave the Commercial Counsellor at this Embassy what purported to be an account of remarks made by Count Ciano to him that same morning regarding the results of the visit of the Prime Minister and Your Lordship to Rome.¹ M. Helfand stated that Count Ciano had told him that, while the discussion had been cordial, the fundamental difficulties and problems remained. The Italians had hoped that the Prime Minister would be willing to mediate on their territorial issues with France, and his refusal to help them in that way had been a serious disappointment. They had been anxious to have from the visit a concrete something to show to their people, and their failure to obtain this something had left them deluded ('delusi'). They were now determined that the Spanish situation must be cleared up at once; at the most within three months, by which time Franco's troops must be in command of the whole Catalan coastline and the Pyrenees frontier. Then the Italian Government would make their formal demand on the French for a review of their Tunisian claims, and in this they would have the whole-hearted support of Germany.

2. M. Helfand added that, when he spoke of the French being equally assured of the support of Great Britain, Count Ciano smiled and made a gesture with his hand. The military power of Germany and Italy together, he said, would have no difficulty in breaking any coalition on the Continent of Europe. They were in an absolutely impregnable position.

3. While I have little confidence in M. Helfand, who, I feel, would not hesitate to twist an account of a conversation with Count Ciano to suit the purposes of Soviet policy and propaganda, yet I cannot say that I feel altogether happy about the future.

¹ For the record of this visit see Volume III of this Series, No. 500.

4. There are too many stories coming in from different sources to the effect that Italy intends to make far-reaching demands on France in the spring, that she is preparing to back them by a threat of force, and that Germany is ready to support her claims, to render the situation reassuring.

5. There is, firstly, this account of the conversations between Count Ciano and M. Helfand; there is the story which the Swedish Minister passed on to 'The Times' correspondent that the German Ambassador here had said to him that he was 'worried and upset' because Signor Mussolini had sent for him and told him that, whatever might have been said during the visit of Mr. Chamberlain and Your Lordship, he intended to proceed with his plans to establish an Italian protectorate over Tunis (see Mr. Yencken's letter to Mr. Ingram² of the 17th January); there are the declarations in the German press that the present position in the Mediterranean is out of date and unfair to Italy, and that the *status quo* in that sea must be revised; there are the reports that Italy intends to be prepared for a possible crisis in March (see my letter to Sir A. Cadogan² of the 29th October last); there is the news that supplies are even now probably being sent to Italy from Germany (see Munich telegrams Nos. 1² and 2² to the Foreign Office); lastly, there is Mme Tabouis' account of the conversation between Herr Hitler and M. Beck, where she states that the Führer observed that a Mediterranean crisis 'infinitely more serious than that of September' was to take place in the spring (see 'The Tablet' of the 14th January).

6. It is true that each of the sources of these political stories is in itself in one way or another suspect, but their cumulative effect, combined with that of Italian preparations for March, cannot but give ground for anxiety.

7. Italy has declared that she does not regard the Franco-Italian Agreement of 1935 as valid, and therefore she considers that she is entitled to territorial concessions from France in virtue of article 13 of the Treaty of London of 1915.³ It is on this basis that she will put forward her claim.

8. On the other hand, reverting to M. Helfand's account of his conversation with Count Ciano, the latter can hardly have expected that the Prime Minister would have been ready to mediate on Italian territorial issues with France.

9. It had been made clear in the press before the visit that no such action was contemplated, and, indeed, as far as I am aware, the word 'mediation' was not breathed by either Signor Mussolini or Count Ciano during the conversations. Further, while Count Ciano remarked to me (see my despatch No. 1205⁴ of the 24th December) that Italy could never abandon the Italian colony of Tunis, he has never suggested that the Italian Government intended to put forward territorial claims either in Tunis or in the Mediterranean regions. Indeed, to do so would be contrary to the letter and spirit of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April last, and to the explicit and renewed

² Not printed.

³ The Treaty of London of 1915 is printed in Cmd. 671 of 1920. See also Series I of this Collection, Vol. IV, chapter 1.

⁴ See Volume III of this Series, No. 482.

pledges given to the Prime Minister that the Italian Government intended to abide by and loyally execute the terms of that agreement.

10. The whole situation is obscure at the present juncture, and it is not possible to foretell what Italy may ultimately demand of France or what she would consider a satisfactory settlement of her claims under the London Treaty of 1915. The only thing that can confidently be predicted is that, once Franco-Italian conversations begin, there will be some stiff bargaining, and that Italy will receive at least full diplomatic support from Germany. It may be that the latter is in an impregnable military situation, but can the same be said of Italy, and must not Signor Mussolini be aware of this? I gather that the Prime Minister told the Duce that he must not underrate the strength of the Democracies, and I trust that this well-timed warning may not be without effect. At the same time I feel that both the French and ourselves should be prepared for possible serious developments once the Spanish civil war has come to an end.

11. I am confirmed in this view by information which has just reached me and which emanates from the Counsellor of the Belgian Embassy, who is on intimate terms with the German Ambassador here. He states that Herr von Mackensen recently observed that 'the French should not be under any illusion—Italy will make a territorial claim to Tunis, and she will declare that this is not a violation of the Anglo-Italian Agreement guaranteeing the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, since France is not legally the owner of Tunis'.

12. On reading through what I have already written, I feel that I may have given a somewhat alarmist picture. Those sections of the Italian people who had persuaded themselves to expect wide concrete results from the visit are necessarily disappointed and require a little time to get used to the unspectacular reality. At the same time Signor Mussolini's repeated assurances to the Prime Minister and Your Lordship, that he would throw his whole weight on the side of peace and would try at all costs to avoid a European war, which could only lead to general chaos, are important, because there is no doubt that the Duce likes to be regarded as a man of his word.

13. It may, of course, be that many of these signs and rumours are part of a façade being put up deliberately to put pressure on France, and the assiduity being shown by the German Ambassador in 'giving away' Italian intentions is at least curious and may be part of a game of bluff. Some observers think that the Italians greatly fear that the Germans, having absorbed Austria and the Sudetenland and turned Czecho-Slovakia into a sort of German protectorate, will proceed inexorably in the spring with the next step in their programme, and that, unless Italy moves first, her own claims on France will be obscured and overlooked in the resulting general disturbance. There is no doubt that many Italians are genuinely afraid of this. They point out that there has always been a tendency to ignore Italy, and that if she wants anything she always has to scream and to force her way into the picture. The French, they say, ignored her feelings when they denounced the Tunis Convention in September 1918, the moment the outcome of the Great War was no longer in doubt. She was ignored at Versailles, despite her shrill protests.

More recently, President Roosevelt left her out entirely when, during the crisis of September 1938, he addressed his appeal for peace to Great Britain, France, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. During the same crisis, they add, Great Britain also ignored Mussolini entirely until the last few hours on the very last day. Now, despite the Axis, the Italians are not quite certain how far the Germans will consult them before embarking on their next move, and a feeling undoubtedly exists amongst Italians that it is now Italy's turn, and that she must somehow or other get in first with her claims.

14. On the other hand, the Germans seem to be showing a disposition at the moment to recognise this Italian feeling and Germany's debt to Italy, and by keeping German claims and intentions in the background to put Italy's claims on the map.

15. It is more than difficult to weigh up all these rather speculative considerations and to draw from them definite conclusions. Perhaps we are all guessing a little as to the immediate future of events in Europe. While I do not at present desire to present an alarmist picture from the angle of Rome, there are, unhappily, sufficient indications to show that the situation is one which requires the greatest watchfulness on the part of our French friends and ourselves.

16. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives in Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

No. 310

Letter from Mr. Ingram to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

[R 71/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 23, 1939*

My dear Ambassador,

There is one point in your despatch No. 1230¹ of December 31 last on which we should like to comment.

In paragraph 4 you give a short account of the early history of intervention in Spain. This account is correct according to our information except in so far as aircraft have always been included in the list of war material which it is forbidden to send to Spain. We cannot help feeling, however, that your account is not altogether complete. In February 1937 the Italian Government bound themselves along with other Governments represented on the Non-Intervention Committee not to send volunteers to Spain. It is true that considerable numbers of Italians and no doubt the bulk of their forces had already arrived by that time in Spain ready to take part in the battle of Guadalajara. But even so, it is clear that the casualties suffered in the course of the last two years must have been heavy, and units could not have been

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 488.

maintained in the field unless they had received very large drafts from Italy. Indeed we know that this has been the case. It can hardly therefore be contested that Italy has broken not only the Agreement of August 1936 regarding war material, but also the later Agreement of February 1937 regarding men. Indeed, Count Ciano admitted in his conversation with the Secretary of State on the 12th January² that his country had sinned almost as much as the French ('the French Government had behaved every bit as badly, if not worse than themselves').

I am sending a copy of this letter to Phipps.

E. M. B. INGRAM

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 500, section (2).

No. 311

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 28)

No. 63 [R 667/7/22]

ROME, January 24, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 46¹ of the 20th January, I have the honour to inform you that I had a long conversation on Saturday morning (21st January) with the French Ambassador here. M. François-Poncet showed me the latest analysis of the situation which he had sent home to his Government. The conclusions reached were almost the same as those set out in my despatch under reference.

2. The Ambassador did not think that the Italian Government would push their claims to the point of war, but he considered that the French Government and His Majesty's Government must be very watchful. In his view, the Italian Government had not yet decided what claims against France they would ultimately put forward; this, he thought, would depend on various circumstances, and in particular whether or not General Franco's success had been complete; the attitude of and internal situation in France; the attitude of England and perhaps above all the attitude of Germany.

3. He held that the Italian claims would vary between a maximum which might include territorial demands as regards Tunis and Jibuti, and a minimum which would comprise some small frontier rectifications, perhaps in the hinterland of Tunis; questions relating to the Jibuti Railway and the port there, the *réglementation* of the situation of the Italian colony in Tunis and matters affecting the Suez Canal dues.

4. He believed that the German Government were likely to endeavour to restrain Signor Mussolini from indulging in a policy of adventure at the present time, but he pointed out that Signor Mussolini had one trump card: he could always tell Herr Hitler that if the latter did not give him full diplomatic and even military support he would have to reconsider the policy of the Axis. The French Ambassador considered that this card would certainly be successful, as Herr Hitler could not allow the Axis to be placed in danger.

¹ No. 309.

He added that he had been present in Germany at the time of the Stresa Conference, and it was the only moment in which he had seen the German Government considerably shaken.

5. I enquired whether he thought it would be a good move for me to broach the subject of possible territorial Italian claims in Tunis with Count Ciano on the basis of the various rumours and statements that were current. The Ambassador had doubts whether such action on my part would be wise. He thought that it might be possible and better to endeavour to enlist Herr Hitler's co-operation in checking Signor Mussolini's ambitions, though this would have to be effected with the utmost discretion. In his view, Herr Hitler had been somewhat unpleasantly affected by Signor Mussolini's insistence at the time of the September crisis, and that he might, therefore, in revenge be prepared to play with Signor Mussolini a role similar to that which Signor Mussolini had played with him in September.

6. On the evening of the 21st, I talked to the American Ambassador, who had just seen Herr von Mackensen; the former had enquired whether the German Ambassador could tell him anything about Italian claims on France. The Ambassador had answered that he could not do so, but gave the impression that he did not think that territorial demands on Tunis would be put forward. It is difficult to reconcile this statement of Herr von Mackensen with what he is alleged to have said to the Swedish Minister and the Belgian Chargé d'Affaires (see paragraphs 5 and 11 of my despatch under reference), but I surmise that the truth is that, as M. François-Poncet suspects, Italian claims have not yet been definitely formulated.

7. Since writing the above, I have had a talk with the Belgian Ambassador here, who came to see me, and the question of Franco-Italian relations came up, as inevitably happens in present circumstances. The Ambassador told me that, in the course of a conversation which he had had with Count Ciano before the visit of the Prime Minister and Your Lordship to Rome, he had remarked to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that he did not see why an agreement should not be reached between France and Italy, provided serious territorial demands were not made on France, and he mentioned Tunis. To this Count Ciano had replied to the effect that one could not ask France for what she did not possess, and added that Tunis was not part of the French Empire.

8. The Ambassador and I agreed that the answer was somewhat cryptic, and that it could be interpreted either favourably or unfavourably. The Ambassador added, however, that he was rather disturbed to hear the same argument—that Tunis was not in fact a French possession—repeated in other Italian quarters accompanied by the statement that, although France always began by saying 'No', she yielded in the end. This is, of course, the thesis that has been often advanced in the Italian press.

9. I have sent copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

No. 312

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [R 616/399/22]

ROME, January 25, 1939, 6.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 38.¹

Official communiqué issued this afternoon announces that calling up of first quota of approximately 60,000 men of 1901 class has been ordered for February 1 for purposes of training and instruction.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of January 24 asked for 'the earliest and fullest information' regarding the calling up of the 1901 class, which had been reported from Naples on January 19.

No. 313

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 59 Telegraphic [R 617/399/22]

ROME, January 25, 1939, 11.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 55.¹

I asked Count Ciano this evening why Italian Government had called up a quota of 1901 class.

Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that this was a purely administrative measure and had no political significance whatever. This was the last time that these particular men would be called to the colours for training. He added with a smile that if Italy had any idea of making war she would not begin by calling up men 40 years old.

I have confidentially informed my French colleague, who spoke to me on the subject with some perturbation, of the above conversation.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 312.

No. 314

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 26)

No. 32 Saving: Telegraphic [R 614/7/22]

PARIS, January 25, 1939

In the course of conversation with His Majesty's Minister on January 24 the Political Director said that the Counsellor of the German Embassy had spoken to him at considerable length and 'in a very moderate manner' about Italian colonial claims a few days before. M. Charvériat had said

that the French Government were totally ignorant of the precise nature of these claims, and asked whether Herr Bräuer could enlighten him. Herr Bräuer had only been able to speak in a very general way about an improvement in the Italian status in Tunis and about seats on the Suez Canal Board. M. Charvériat had explained to him how impossible it was for the French Government to deal with matters on this vague basis. He went on to tell Mr. Campbell that the Ministry were very conscious of German moderation with regard to these Italian claims and that they had noticed for some weeks this spirit of moderation, 'if not a definitely marked retreat', in the German attitude towards France. He did not know exactly how to interpret this though it might be the Franco-German Agreement of December at work.

Mr. Campbell asked M. Charvériat to what he attributed the distinct feeling of anxiety which was so noticeable in Paris that day. M. Charvériat said that in his opinion it was due first and obviously to the approach of a *dénouement* in Spain, and secondly to Signor Mussolini's speech of January 23 to Italian farmers.¹ When Mr. Campbell suggested that he had not seen anything very much new in this speech to cause fresh anxiety, M. Charvériat replied that although it told nothing new to Governments, it had had a certain effect on the public here, since it was the first time on which Signor Mussolini or any Italian authority had taken up a position over the Italian claims and the French reactions thereto, and this made a certain impression, particularly after the Italian Government's disavowal of the demonstrations in the Italian Chamber on November 30.²

¹ In this speech at Rome on January 22 Signor Mussolini said that 'according to a French prelate the Vatican has counselled France to hold firm. . . . Supposing to-morrow someone were to be found, as he certainly will be found, to tell the Italians to hold still more firmly.' The Foreign Office agreed with Mr. Campbell's view of the speech.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 470.

No. 315

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 26, 9.30 p.m.)*

No. 62 Telegraphic [R 645/399/22]

ROME, January 26, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 55.¹

Military Attaché, who returned from a tour today, considers calling up of part of the reservists of 1901 class may mark the commencement of a policy of re-training those reservists who did not serve in the Great War. In view of the rapid development of Italian army in recent years this measure thus does not seem necessarily to signify abnormal military development.

¹ No. 312.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received January 31, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 66 Telegraphic [R 738/399/22]

ROME, January 30, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 62.¹

Military Attaché on January 28 asked Italian Director of Military Intelligence if he could give you any further information regarding the calling up of 60,000 reservists of 1901 class. Director of Military Intelligence informed the Military Attaché that it was a normal training measure, had no special significance and did not foreshadow any organised system of re-training of the older reservists in rotation. He pointed out that 1901 class was the oldest class which had missed the war and as a result had undergone its training when war weariness was at its height. The men of this class had learnt very little and the Ministry of War were anxious to find out how much or how little they did know. Amongst those called up would be a large number of specialists whose previous training would probably be found to have been useless.

Director of Military Intelligence further stated that some of these men would be sent for training to Libya where the weather conditions would be better at this time of the year and where they would be able to see the great progress that was being made in the Empire. He was unable to state how long they would be retained with the colours.

Non-commissioned officer who is employed in mobilisation office in conversation with a member of the Military Attaché's staff corroborated the foregoing and added that one of the reasons for this measure was the rising tide of unemployment in Italy, especially in the south. This accords with report from His Majesty's Consul-General at Milan dated January 28 to the effect that 'calling-up' order affected Northern Italy less than the south and centre. Military Attaché has already drawn attention in connexion with repatriation of 10,000 volunteers from Spain (see my despatch 1940²) to extremely low category of these men and suggested that they might largely have been unemployed communists pressed into service for Spanish war. Many of them appeared to be southerners and in Military Attaché's view it is possible that their disappointment on return at the conditions at home has led to promulgation of this 'calling up' order to deal with unemployed in another way.

The non-commissioned officer referred to added that many of these men would be despatched to Libya where they could be employed building roads and [? driving] lorries.

¹ No. 315.

² This figure is a mistake. It has not been possible to identify the reference.

No. 317

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 3)

No. 24 Saving: Telegraphic [R 802/399/22]

ROME, January 30, 1939

His Majesty's Consul-General at Naples reported on January 26 that it appeared that men of 1920 class and those born between May 1 and December 31, 1919 were now being called up. Notices calling of [*sic* ? up] 1920 class are posted in Rome. His Majesty's Consul in Florence reported January 27 that rumours were current in Florence that 30,000 men were being called up.

Military Attaché whom I have consulted observed that recruits are normally examined and registered the year in which they have their 20th birthday and join the colours the following year but Minister of War is empowered under laws of military service, which are very elastic, to enrol recruits a year earlier or a year later if he considers it desirable and he may call them up even younger in a case of national emergency. As an example of normal procedure a man born on any day in 1919 would be examined and registered in 1939 and called to the colours in the spring of 1940. Calling up for examination and registration is thus normal for 1919 class but not for 1920 class. The 1919 class is however the last of the weak war time classes containing approximately three hundred and seventeen thousand men while the 1920 class is abnormally strong individually, approximately 477,000 men. Military Attaché considers it possible that the use is being made of elasticity of the laws of military service to call up some elements of 1920 class simultaneously with 1919 class in order to effect an equalisation of numbers which will facilitate training.

No. 318

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 2, 11.30 p.m.)*

No. 68 Telegraphic [R 801/57/22]

ROME, February 2, 1939, 9.15 p.m.

Today's press publishes a message from London stating that the Berlin correspondent of the 'News Chronicle' reports the following declaration made to him by 'a high official of the Wilhelmstrasse'.

'In the interests of European peace it is necessary to emphasize that the interpretation of the phrase¹ referring to support of Italy by Germany, as given by certain newspapers, is false. The German expression, which signified by and large a war into which Italy is provoked or dragged, has induced some to think that Germany will only help Italy if she is attacked. Let there be no doubt. If Italy is involved in a war, whether she is the

¹ For the phrase used by Herr Hitler, see No. 321, note 2.

attacked or the attacker, Germany will lose no time in enquiring who is the aggressor but will immediately give full military support to Italy being certain that if Italy has attacked she has done so to defend her rights.'

French Embassy learned of this reported declaration late last night and telephoned it to Paris.

Much prominence is given to the declaration in this evening's Italian press. This 'authentic' explanation, it is pointed out, was unnecessary in Italy, where it was fully understood what Herr Hitler meant but it is opportune because it disproves the interpretations of certain foreign commentators. The elucidation given by the Wilhelmstrasse established a truth which was being understood in France with the greatest difficulty.

No. 319

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 60 Telegraphic [J 451/33/66]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 3, 1939, 3.50 p.m.*

Please at once submit following to Count Ciano:—

At the time of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of April 16 last the Italian Government undertook to withdraw 1,000 men a week from their forces in Libya until their effectives there reached peace strength, which was estimated as not less than half the troops in Libya when the Anglo-Italian conversations commenced. During the months of May and June 1938 a reduction took place in the Italian forces in Libya; it is understood, however, that at the time of the crisis at the end of September the numbers of these troops were increased again to the figure at which they stood at the time of the commencement of the Anglo-Italian conversations. During the month of November, a reduction took place in the strength of these forces, but in December there were no evacuations and in January further reinforcements of troops, appreciable quantities of war material and guns have been landed in Libya. It is understood that the Italian Government contemplate sending to Libya a proportion of the reservists of the 1901 class who have recently been called up; this would constitute a further increase in the forces now in that territory.

It has been noticed that the Italian post at Kufra is receiving reinforcements of troops and artillery. The uneasiness engendered by these movements has not been diminished as a result of the presence in Libya of General Udet of the German Air Force and the report which has appeared in the German press that Herr Lutze, Chief of Staff of the Storm Troops of the Nazi Party and a mechanisation expert,¹ is also about to visit Libya.

As regards Italian East Africa it has been learnt that the recruiting of Somalis in the neighbourhood of British Somaliland has recently been

¹ In a letter to His Majesty's Embassy at Rome of February 6, Mr. Cavendish-Bentinck explained that Herr Lutze, Chief of Staff of the S.A., was known to be in Italy, and that a similarity of names might have given rise to the rumour that General Lutz, the German army mechanization expert, was about to visit Libya.

intensified, that some 10 or 12,000 troops have during the course of the last fortnight in January been moved in the direction of the frontiers of French Somaliland, together with artillery, tanks, armoured cars, etc., and that petrol and other supplies in Dire Dawa are being prepared.

The above information comes to us from sources which we must regard as reliable, and it is disturbing. I feel it is desirable, in a spirit of frankness, to let Count Ciano know what information has been reported to us, and I should be glad to hear his comments.

Repeated to Cairo.

No. 320

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 61 Telegraphic [R 802/399/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 3, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 24 Saving.¹

Under present conditions such reports should be sent by ordinary telegram *not* Saving.

2. It is not clear from your telegram whether men of last 8 months of 1919 class and men of 1920 classes are to join the colours this year or whether they are only being enrolled, i.e. examined and registered. If they are to join the colours, establishment of Italian army might be raised by as much as 250,000 men.

3. As men born in first four months of 1919 were enrolled with 1918 class in 1938 they will presumably join the colours early in 1939 and it would thus be natural for men of last eight months of 1919 and at least a part of 1920 to be enrolled now for service in 1940. As we see it, it would be abnormal for these men to join the colours in 1939.

¹ No. 317.

No. 321

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 4, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 54 Telegraphic [R 837/57/22]

BERLIN, *February 3, 1939, 10.30 p.m.*

Rome telegram No. 68.¹

'News Chronicle' correspondent was informed by person in close touch with the head of the Press Department at the Foreign Office that official circles were perturbed at the interpretation given by certain organs of the foreign press that Germany would not be on the side of Italy if Italy attacked first. Hence the statement published by the 'News Chronicle' of February 1

¹ No. 318.

the second sentence of which reads 'the German idiom "vom Zaune gebrochen", meaning roughly a war into which Italy is provoked, etc.'²

There is a consensus of opinion that the phrase 'of rival ideologies'³ was not actually uttered by Herr Hitler and it was evidently omitted either by accident or purposely at the last moment after the speech had been translated. This of course makes Herr Hitler's statement all the stronger and you will observe from penultimate sentence of paragraph 2 of my despatch No. 139⁴ that it is in practice immaterial whether it was used or not, as any quarrel in which Italy may be involved can be easily twisted into a clash of ideologies. I am also informed from the same source, and this I report with all reserve, that the object of Lutze's present visit to Rome is to deliver message from Herr Hitler suggesting that Signor Mussolini in his forthcoming speech should not press his claims too far.

Repeated to Paris and Rome.

² Herr Hitler's speech of January 30 to the Reichstag included a sentence to the effect that Germany would support Italy in any war waged against her ('... ein Krieg gegen das heutige Italien, ganz gleich aus welchen Motiven, vom Zaune gebrochen, Deutschland an die Seite des Freundes rufen wird'). The statement by a 'high official of the German Foreign Office', reported by the 'News Chronicle', explained that German assistance would be given whether Italy 'attacked or was attacked'. See No. 318 and also No. 65.

³ i.e. a 'war of rival ideologies against Italy'. These words appear in the first English translation of the speech provided by the German Foreign Office, but they do not occur in the speech delivered by Herr Hitler as mechanically recorded at the time.

⁴ Not printed.

No. 322

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 4, 11.50 a.m.)

No. 70 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 843/399/22]

ROME, February 4, 1939

Your telegram No. 61.¹

According to Military Attaché's information the men of last eight months of 1919 and part of 1920 are only being enrolled.

Military Attaché, who has discussed question with his French and United States colleagues, considers that this is normal.

¹ No. 320.

No. 323

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 5, 4.55 p.m.)

No. 71 Telegraphic [R 844/399/22]

ROME, February 4, 1939, 3.20 p.m.

The calling up of sixty thousand reservists of 1901 class reported in my telegram No. 55¹ has given rise to many rumours. His Majesty's Consul-

¹ No. 312.

General, Naples, reports the calling up of specialists of 1902/3/4 and 5 classes and also of reservists of Italian Army Commissariat of all classes. He has confirmation of the latter in persons of two reservists of 1906 and 1908 classes. He also hears that naval reservists of 1900 and 1905 classes have been called and that, whereas specialists have been drafted to their stations, all other ratings of these classes are being sent into army as infantry. Military Attaché discussed these rumours yesterday with his French and American colleagues who had also received them and is of opinion that nothing abnormal is happening but that the official communiqué reported in my telegram No. 55 which announced that sixty thousand reservists called up belonging to 1901 class has not been strictly adhered to and that men—probably specialists—of other classes of approximately similar seniority have been called up.

There is nothing new in the calling up of selected categories of reservists for training but in previous years this has been done unostentatiously whereas this year the maximum publicity has been given to the measure. It is possible that this is due to a desire to impress the French at the present juncture.

Military Attaché considers it possible that the calling up of these comparatively old reservists is a measure to improve mobilization machinery which is known to have been found inadequate during the crisis last September. He thinks it may be intended to draft these men to mobilization centres where they will take charge of detail work involved with arrival at these centres of younger men in time of emergency. Military Attaché hopes to obtain further information about this shortly.

No. 324

*Letter from the Earl of Perth (Rome) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received February 7)*

[R 933/1/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, ROME, *February 4, 1939*

Foreign Office despatch No. 142¹ of January 30, enclosing a copy of a letter from Knox to Sargent regarding a conversation between Knox and the Editor of the Washington 'Evening Star' about the latter's recent interview with Ciano.

I shook Ciano on September 28 out of his belief that England would never fight, but he may again have fallen into his old error. We all feel that it is held more or less generally in Rome that England will not fight, at least unless she is directly threatened. The French Embassy have been very insistent lately that Ciano and probably Mussolini are convinced of this; they say that keen Fascists have spoken to them on these lines; it is under this aspect, they add, that François-Poncet is nervous of the Prime Minister's references, which are always given great prominence in the Italian press, to

¹ Not printed. For Sir G. Knox's letter, see Volume III of this Series, No. 498.

the theory that questions between nations can be solved by negotiation without recourse to war.

It seems almost incredible that Mussolini, or even Ciano, should still harbour delusions on this score in view of what the Prime Minister said to the Duce after dinner at the Embassy on January 13,² about the fighting qualities of democracies.

The Prime Minister also made it quite clear at Birmingham³ and again in the House of Commons on January 31,⁴ that we would fight in certain circumstances. At least, this would be perfectly clear to an English audience, but the mentality here, as you know, is inclined to expect the 'i's' to be dotted and the 't's' crossed, and I fancy the Prime Minister's language may not have sunk in among Italians to the right extent. In the same way the references to France may, to the mentality of the Axis Powers, have seemed perfunctory instead of positive. In my view it would therefore be all to the good if the Prime Minister felt able to make some public reference to the position in terms as unequivocal as those he used in speaking to Signor Mussolini here, and perhaps the sooner the better.

² See Volume III of this Series, No. 500, section (3).

³ i.e. on January 28.

⁴ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 343, cols. 72-82.

No. 325

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 5, 10.0 a.m.)*

No. 72 Telegraphic [J 453/33/66]

ROME, February 5, 1939, 1.0 a.m.

Your telegram No. 60.¹

I communicated the information to Count Ciano this evening² and spoke as instructed.

Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that on the point of the forces in Libya he would have to make enquiries and promised to let me know results in a day or two. The same applies to the Kufra reinforcements.

As regards the presence of General Udet in Libya the General had gone there as a tourist as would also Herr Lutze if he visited the country which was doubtful.

Count Ciano observed he could assure me that the Italian Government had never had any discussion with the German authorities about Italian troop numbers, dispositions, movements, etc., in Africa. They felt quite able to look after this themselves and even in the darkest time had not talked to Germans about Africa.

In regard to Italian East Africa the Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that though he would also have to make enquiries in this respect he thought there was a likelihood that some moves of the kind referred to had taken place.

¹ No. 319.

² This telegram was drafted on February 4.

If it had it was the result of the strengthening of the French forces in Tunis from Morocco and elsewhere. I observed that when two countries moved troops in this way the results might be dangerous; to which the Minister for Foreign Affairs retorted that the French had begun it.

Incidentally Count Ciano told me the total number of Italian troops in Libya when the Anglo-Italian conversations began was between 65 and 70 thousand men.

No. 326

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 5, 7.30 p.m.)*

No. 73 Telegraphic [R 894/399/22]

ROME, February 5, 1939, 5.50 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

I am not happy at what is happening here.

I learn from a most confidential and reliable source that a good deal of secret calling up among the younger officers is going on and that the present preparations much exceed in this respect what took place during the September crisis.

No. 327

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 7, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 77 Telegraphic [J 493/33/66]

ROME, February 6, 1939, 11.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 72.¹

Count Ciano told me this evening that he had now consulted Signor Mussolini with regard to communication which I had made to him on Saturday last—your telegram No. 60.²

There were at present thirty to thirty-two thousand Italian troops in Libya but Italian Government intended to send thirty thousand more though these had not yet left. This increase was due to large numbers of French forces which had, as he had already mentioned to me, been sent to Tunis from Morocco and elsewhere. He stated that he believed there were now something approaching one hundred thousand troops in Tunisia. He remarked that Italian measures were purely for defence purposes. He pointed out incidentally that a French General had written an article in 'Revue des Deux Mondes'³ advocating that Italian control over Libya should be swept away as quickly as possible. It was therefore necessary to provide for security of Libya and thirty thousand troops were being sent for this purpose. We

¹ No. 325.

² No. 319.

³ For a summary of this article, see No. 353.

should be duly informed of movement according to terms of Exchange of Military Information Agreement. Minister for Foreign Affairs added that he did not take a tragic view of the situation between Italy and France and indeed was inclined to be optimistic but provision must be made for any possible eventuality. He added that reinforcements would all be sent to western frontier and that no increase would take place on the eastern side, namely, towards Egypt.

No. 328

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 7, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 79 Telegraphic [R 895/399/22]

ROME, February 6, 1939, 11.45 p.m.

French Ambassador whom I saw for a few minutes this afternoon expressed great pleasure at statement made by Prime Minister in the House of Commons today.¹ He said that he thought there were two things which could put a check to Italians' inordinate ambitions:

1. Clear talk by England.
2. Restraint by Germany.

He believed himself that the second was being exercised and he was glad to see the first was being fulfilled.

Personal. I have been shown a letter from Count Grandi to Mr. Osborne in which the former says that he hopes to be in Rome again next Easter and his last phrase is 'everything is going well now *at last*'.

¹ See No. 94, note 1.

No. 329

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 8, 9.10 p.m.)

No. 83 Telegraphic [R 943/399/22]

ROME, February 8, 1939, 8.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 71.¹

Military Attaché learns that many of the 60,000 men of the 1901 class who have just been called up have been dismissed as unfit for service and that their places are being taken by men from all classes up to 1910.

Military Attaché considers that this is an indication that the Ministry of War are testing the fitness for war of older classes of conscripts in order to be able to judge which is the oldest class able to be counted on for service as first line troops in the event of war.

¹ No. 323.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 13)

No. 122 [R 1004/7/22]

ROME, February 10, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that during the weeks before the Prime Minister made his statement on the 6th February in the House of Commons¹ that any threat to French vital interests would evoke immediate British co-operation, the Italian press displayed a tendency to represent opinion in England as taking for granted that Italy would make demands on France at an early date, but as unwilling to commit itself either to supporting these demands or to supporting France in resisting them.

2. Discussing, for instance, opinion on the eve of the Grand Council session on the 4th February, the London 'Messaggero' correspondent said that it was believed in London that the Council would examine the Spanish question, particularly in the light of Italian claims against France, and would draft the note to be presented eventually to France for the settlement of accounts. The correspondent went on to say that in certain circles 'people continue to cherish a remarkable optimism regarding the possibility of a peaceful solution of the question at issue between Italy and France.' He quoted the 'Sunday Express' as saying that Italy would continue to press her just claims with energy and that it seemed from M. Bonnet's recent admissions to the journalists (even though these had afterwards been denied in part) that France might be ready to take Italian demands into consideration.

3. This opinion, according to the 'Messaggero' correspondent, corresponded to the views of a large section of the British public, who would wish England to pursue a policy of isolation and see in the agreements with France, and, in fact, any other international engagement, a grave danger that England might be involved in a European conflict for a cause which is not that of the British Empire. This attitude, he maintained, was strongly opposed by the Left and by the group of Conservatives, headed by Mr. Eden, who opposed a *rapprochement* with Italy. The attitude of the Government, as was known, he said, was balanced up to the present between the isolationist and what might be called the interventionist tendency; and, indeed, the recent declarations of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, though they contained assurances as to an identity of views and of interests between England and France, contained no formal assurance of military support even remotely similar to that given by Herr Hitler to Italy.

4. The same correspondent, writing from London on the 5th February, after the meeting of the Fascist Grand Council, observed that in England people were realising that the essential condition which the Rome-Berlin Axis laid down for the establishment of a durable peace in Europe was the previous satisfaction of the natural and unavoidable necessities of Italy and Germany.

¹ See No. 94, note 1.

5. The writer then quoted Mr. Garvin in the 'Observer' as saying that the supreme effort to save the peace for which Great Britain must gird herself consisted in recognising that the younger and more prolific nations had the right to demand a redistribution of territory from the rich democracies; in other words, the question was whether Great Britain was prepared to return the colonies to Germany and not to oppose the natural aspirations of Italy.

6. To this interrogation, said the correspondent, no answer could yet be given, because the question had not been raised in a sufficiently definite form to render an answer unavoidable. On the one hand, the feverish preparations in the sphere of armaments would suggest that the British Government had decided, if the situation matured, to adopt an attitude of intransigence. On the other, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax in recent speeches had repeated that the British Government intended to pursue a policy of *détente* and that they were prepared to take into consideration 'justifiable aspirations and requests', provided that an atmosphere was previously created which was favourable to such a discussion.

7. More press utterances could be quoted to a similar effect. An article in the 'Popolo d'Italia' of the 5th February, speaking of the 'great consternation' in France at the fact that Mr. Chamberlain had formed an optimistic estimate of Herr Hitler's speech on the 30th January, said that France expected a concise affirmation of Anglo-French solidarity and hoped for a statement that the forces of Great Britain would be at the disposal of France in case of an aggression, in reply to a similar declaration made by the Quai d'Orsay. The article concluded that Mr. Chamberlain had made it clear to France that, while England was friendly, she was not bound to France by ties of matrimony, at least in the sense of 'pledging herself on the altar of democracy to fight against the totalitarian States'.

8. The leading article in the serious weekly 'International Relations' maintained that Italian and German aspirations proceeded hand in hand and went so far as to enquire 'by what right the democracies refuse to restore colonial territories to Italy and Germany'. It maintained that a refusal to meet the natural aspirations of a people rendered the use of arms legal, and it added that, whereas the solidarity between Germany and Italy was one of an identity between decision and action, that between democracies was incomplete and divided.

9. An attempt was therefore being made in the Italian press to link together German colonial demands and Italian 'natural aspirations' and to suggest that there could be no peace until both were satisfied. Italian requirements were not defined, but it was hinted that the Italian Government might make them clear before many weeks were out; and since the press had previously alluded to territorial and economic claims of a very far-reaching nature, and no indication had been given that the Government did not support these pretensions, the effect was to suggest that the Government identified itself with the newspaper view. The people of England were represented as unwilling in the majority to support France in resisting these claims at the expense of peace and uneasily aware that there would be war

unless Italian and German demands were met; while the Government of the United Kingdom were made to appear as undecided between a course of intransigence and one of accommodation, and as meanwhile determined not to come out in open support of their French ally.

10. As already reported by telegram, when the statement was made by the Prime Minister, the immediate reaction of Italian correspondents in London was to try to minimise the significance of the assurance given to France. They emphasised that it contained no idea of an 'automatic' application of the promised co-operation, inasmuch as His Majesty's Government reserved for themselves the right of deciding whether or not to intervene, and that, therefore, no comparison was possible between the affirmation of Franco-British solidarity by the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler's 'categorical and unequivocal' pledge. The 'Informazione Diplomatica' note, issued late on the 8th February, plainly indicates, however, that official circles have grasped the full significance of the Prime Minister's statement.

11. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representative at Paris.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

No. 331

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 13)

No. 131 [R 1008/399/22]

ROME, February 10, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 83¹ of February 8, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy regarding the recent recall of 60,000 men of the 1901 class in Italy.

2. Your Lordship will observe that the Assistant French Military Attaché told the Assistant Military Attaché to this Embassy on February 9 that he was convinced that the recall of these men was a social rather than a military measure—an opinion which is apparently shared by the German Assistant Military Attaché. Major Donati added that, according to his information, of the 60,000 men noted for recall, only those who were out of work or whose wages were less than the cost of a soldier to the State were actually sent calling-up notices, and that when men in better positions were sent notices in error, they were immediately discharged on presenting themselves and explaining their case. I have already reported to Your Lordship (in my telegram No. 83 of February 8) that many of the 60,000 men of the 1901 class have, according to the information of the Military Attaché, been dismissed as unfit for service. These factors would seem to account for the fact that, as the Military Attaché has also learnt, the places of the men of the 1901 class found unsuitable for actual calling up have apparently been taken by men from

¹ No. 329.

later classes, but in this case too only those in indigent circumstances are being taken.

3. Major Donati also informed Major Barclay that he had heard that the men called up were to be sent to Libya where they would be employed on road and barrack construction. As regards the Military Attaché's suggestion that some of the men of the 1901 class now recalled may be sent to Libya ostensibly as soldiers but actually as navvies, I should observe that from the remarks made to me by Count Ciano on February 6, in regard to the Italian forces in Libya (please see my telegram No. 77² of February 6), I received the impression that 30,000 *trained troops* were to be sent to Libya. That this is the correct interpretation seems to be borne out by His Excellency's reference on that occasion to the Agreement regarding the exchange of military information, for if the movements in question merely referred to navvies, or labourers, even if ostensibly they were soldiers, they would hardly come within the scope of that Agreement.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

² No. 327.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 331

Calling up of 60,000 Reservists

No. 127.

Memorandum

ROME, February 9, 1939

His Excellency,

1. In continuation of my Memorandum No. 115¹ of 7 February 1939, I have to report that this morning the Assistant Military Attaché had a conversation with the French Assistant Military Attaché regarding the recent recall of 60,000 men of the 1901 class.

2. Major Donati said that he was convinced that the recall was rather a social than a military measure. He added in parenthesis that this was also the opinion of Major Pretzell, the German Assistant Military Attaché, with whom he had discussed the matter. He (Maj. Donati) had had information that of the 60,000 men noted for recall, only those who were out of work or whose wages were less than the cost of a soldier to the State were actually sent calling up notices. Where men in better positions were sent notices in error, they were immediately discharged on presenting themselves and explaining their case. The requisite numbers were subsequently made up by recalling men from later classes, as before only those in indigent circumstances being taken.

3. Major Donati went on to say that he had also heard that the men called up were to be sent to Libya where they would be employed on road and barrack construction.

4. The contents of para. 2 confirms para. 1 of my memo 115 of 7/2/39.

5. As regards para. 3 above, Your Excellency will remember Count

¹ Not printed.

Ciano's statement that 30,000 soldiers were to be sent to Libya. This might account for half the men recalled, while it is possible that the remainder will be sent there, as Major Donati suggested, as labourers. His Majesty's Consul Tripoli recently reported that labourers were being sent to Libya dressed in uniform in order not to cause discontent among the Arabs, who might otherwise have been employed. If this is the accepted policy, perhaps the men now recalled will be sent to Libya as *de jure* soldiers and *de facto* navvies.

6. A confirmation of Major Donati's story was provided by my chief clerk, Capt. Andreoni, who told me today that an Italian engineer had told him that a large number of the men of the 1901 class who had been called up had been discharged for family reasons, and that the remainder, chiefly unemployed, were to be sent to Libya.

7. My assistant clerk, Mr. Wyndham, also heard from an Italian friend of his that though it had been published in the press that only 60,000 men of the 1901 class were to be called up, in point of fact the whole of that class had been combed and only the unemployed extracted and put into uniform. If that is correct it would account for my information, as given in para. 1 of my memo 115 of 7/2/39, and corroborated by Major Donati, that men of later classes were also recalled. I think it is probable that, as Major Donati suggested, the recalled men of later classes would also be unemployed or those whose standard of living would be raised by incorporation in the Army.

P. BARCLAY,
Major,
for M. B. BURROWS,
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 332

*Letter from His Majesty's Embassy (Rome) to Southern Department,
Foreign Office (Received February 13)*

[R 1010/7/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, ROME, *February 10, 1939*

Dear Department,

A member of the staff in a recent conversation about the international situation and in particular the campaign against France with a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, elicited the following views. We record them because they may represent the attitude of the ordinary member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is not particularly in touch with the men at the top but who must gain general impressions from the milieu in which he works. The official has been several years in British territory, is genuinely very friendly to our country, and ought to have learned something of our mentality during that period. His remarks are of interest if only as an illustration of the mentality with which we have to deal.

The official in question

(1) clearly did not know what his Government's intentions were in regard to France;

(2) although he admitted that the Italian press began the attack on France he thought it quite intolerable that the French press should reply to these attacks. He was of course particularly indignant about the attacks on the valour of the Italian soldiers; and thought that they had no justification in the Italian press campaign;

(3) he found it difficult to grasp the difference between what was said in a minor and independent French newspaper and what was said in the controlled Italian press. He said that the Italian Government did not instigate the Italian press, and although he admitted that they could control it if they wished he did not see why they should. If the French press, he said, lets itself go over Italy why should not the Italian press be allowed to let itself go about France?

(4) he thought (or at least he evidently hoped) that, while the Italian press had advanced claims of every kind against France, the claims which would be advanced by the Italian Government would be reasonable. He clearly relied on the British Government and people finding reasonable what seemed reasonable to himself and he equally relied on our persuading the French to accept these terms, regardless of the circumstances. He persisted in ignoring the fact that the way in which France had been approached made it impossible for her to make any concessions at present and could not see that even if the British Government wanted to make the French give way now they would be unable to do so (here we feel the old belief is apparent, which did us so much harm in Italy during sanctions, that England can make France and their joint friends do exactly what she likes and is therefore ultimately responsible for the policy which they pursue). He realised that England would support France if there were war, but he thought there would be war if France refused to negotiate on the terms which the Italian Government put forward. He said what a pity it would be if there was war over a refusal, for reasons of prestige, to entertain proposals in themselves reasonable and seemed to think that the English must be sufficiently practical to ignore the conditions in which the demands were made and to consider merely their formal justice. Finally he thought that we and the French had more to lose than the Italians by fighting and would logically, therefore, make concessions to avoid war. Here the member of the staff told him that if we had more to lose, we had also more to fight for; adding that Mussolini had himself told the Prime Minister that in his opinion war would mean the end of European civilisation. The official, however, said that you never could tell what happened in war and was obviously determined to look on the bright side of things.

We need hardly add that throughout the conversation the Italian never displayed any doubts as to the desirability or otherwise from the moral point of view of pure 'Machtpolitik'.

The view expressed about British ability to influence France is very widely held here.

Finally we may report the gist of a conversation which another member of the staff had with a foreign journalist here. This person said that he did

not believe that the Italians intended to formulate extreme claims against France in regard to Tunis. He gathered from Italian friends that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were already working out some compromise solution which might be internationally acceptable and could be produced at an appropriate moment; the basis of the solution being the status of the Bey of Tunis, from which we surmise he meant that some attempt would be made to re-establish the full juridical authority of the Bey, and reduce the standing of the French, while at the same time acquiring some standing for the Italians. This seems to us to be quite likely.

We have sent a copy of this letter to the Chancery at Paris.

Yours ever,
CHANCERY

No. 333

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 73 Telegraphic [R 894/399/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 11, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 71.¹

In view of the military activities in Italy reported in your telegram under reference and earlier telegrams it is essential that we should watch and be known to be watching the situation closely. The Service Attachés therefore should continue to press the Italian authorities for explanations of any military activities that may come to their notice, in order that the Italian Government may realise that we are fully aware of what is going on.

¹ No. 323.

No. 334

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 76 Telegraphic [J 493/33/66]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 11, 1939, 4.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 77.¹

We cannot feel satisfied with the explanations offered by Count Ciano for the proposed large increase in the Libyan garrison and you should speak to him on the following lines.

2. His Majesty's Government greatly regret the fact that the Italian Government feel obliged in present circumstances to depart from the policy of progressive reduction in the Libyan garrison, foreshadowed in the Exchange of Notes of the 16th April.²

Nor can they feel that there is any adequate justification for this departure,

¹ No. 327.

² The Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938 is printed in Cmd. 5726 of 1938.

in the suggestion that the increase now proposed is necessitated by the fact that the security of Libya is being threatened by France. Nor can they believe that the Italian Government would rely for evidence of this threat on an irresponsible article in a French review.

3. For your own information, we believe that the French garrison in Tunis and Algiers together amounts to roughly 104,000 men of whom perhaps not more than 40,000 may be in Tunis. We are not aware that any important reinforcements have been sent to Tunis recently. The numbers or reinforcements of the French garrison are of course irrelevant, since the French are no more likely to attack the Italians than were the Abyssinians in 1935.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 335

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 92 [J 597/33/66]

ROME, February 13, 1939, 8.25 p.m.

(? Your telegram No. 76¹)²

I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs as instructed.

He replied that while Italian Government had fully executed engagements taken under Exchange of Notes of April 16 and had even gone beyond them since the Libya garrison had been reduced to some 28,000 men, they had never contemplated that those engagements would prohibit them from providing for complete security of Libya if circumstances so required.

Not only were there large French forces of all kinds in North Africa as a whole but French Government had greatly reinforced garrison of Tunis and had concentrated considerable strength on the frontier. I asked him if he was certain of the accuracy of his information on this point and he declared that he was.

I remarked that even so I was convinced that there was no likelihood whatever of a French attack on Libya. The Minister for Foreign Affairs while agreeing that such a contingency was unlikely stated that in view of the measures taken by France and existing situation it was essential for the Italian Government to provide for the defence of Libya. The present garrison was not adequate for this purpose and even when it had been brought up to 62,000 men it would just be sufficient, but, and with emphasis, solely for defensive purposes.

On my repeating that any attack by France was to my mind unthinkable Count Ciano referred to an article in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes'.³

I said that neither my Government nor I could believe the Italian Govern-

¹ No. 334.

² This suggested reference was inserted in the Foreign Office.

³ For a summary of this article, see No. 353.

ment could rely on an irresponsible article of this kind and remarked that if such articles were to be taken into consideration in connexion with military preparations what about the one in 'Relazioni Internazionali' which seemed to me deplorable (see my telegram No. 41 Saving⁴).

The Minister for Foreign Affairs gave no indication as to whether he had read the article or not and I did not think it wise to pursue discussion on the point in case it raised the question of Italian claims against France. Finally the Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that when things again became normal the question of the strength of Libya garrison would again be reviewed.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram summarized an article in 'Relazioni Internazionali' of February 11, for the gist of which see No. 336.

No. 336

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 81 Telegraphic [R 1089/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 15, 1939, 11.15 p.m.*

'Daily Telegraph' of February 13 reports that 'Relazioni Internazionali' of that week had published an article saying 'Tunisia, Jibuti, Corsica and Nice are so many problems which must be settled. If France does not want to settle them peacefully they will be settled by war'.¹ Article then goes on to threaten France in plainest terms with war against Italy and Germany unless she gives way.

2. If this article bears the interpretation which the 'Daily Telegraph' has placed upon it, you should remind Count Ciano of the Prime Minister's statement of February 6.² That statement, which was made with general approbation of all parties, can leave no doubt of real solidarity existing between this country and France. Consequently the publication in such a journal as 'Relazioni Internazionali' of an article threatening France with war if she does not make certain unspecified concessions cannot fail to cause extreme concern to His Majesty's Government especially when, as the Italian Government knows, we are anxious to improve our relations with them and to work with them for improvement of general relations in Europe.

We were glad to receive recently Count Ciano's disavowal of earlier articles, and we hope we may look to him to use his influence to prevent publication of such dangerous articles as that to which I am asking you to draw his attention.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ An article entitled 'Gli interessi vitali e la pace con giustizia', containing these statements appeared in 'Relazioni Internazionali' on February 11, 1939. A summary of this article was telegraphed by Lord Perth on February 14, in telegram No. 41, Saving, but had not been received when No. 336 was drafted.

² See No. 94, note 1.

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received February 17)**No. 45 Saving: Telegraphic [W 2911/1114/41]*

ROME, February 15, 1939

My telegram No. 44 (? Saving)¹ of today's date.

The eagerness on the part of the British and French Governments to establish cordial relations with General Franco continues to be emphasised by the press. Some correspondents report from London that His Majesty's Government are in a greater hurry to recognise General Franco than the Daladier Government which, owing to pressure from extreme elements, is compelled to assume an equivocal attitude. In today's article entitled 'Obstacle Race', Dr. Gayda points out that 'hesitations, manoeuvres, bargainings and blackmail' are spoiling the apparent sincerity of the British and French gesture. He denies that Italy and Germany are in any way concerned by this competition with their policy, and declares that Franco, who has rejected a compromise peace, will reject a compromise recognition.

An article in the 'Popolo d'Italia' entitled 'Disgust' denounces in the strongest terms the 'revolting' spectacle of the former 'instigators, supporters and accomplices' of the Red Spanish Government drawing closer to Franco, with the object of placating him and at the same time of defrauding him of his victory and honour. 'The English hypocrites who throughout the struggle have in a dignified manner feigned an honest impartiality while secretly supplying international criminals with ships and munitions', and the French 'sycophants', seeing that their game was up, had changed tactics and, 'with a bad faith equalled only by their impudence', now came forward as friends and protectors, for whom Franco should sacrifice his real friends.

The 'Resto del Carlino' voices the indignation of all the Italians and Spaniards, 'united in their common faith and high sense of honour', for the offer of financial assistance made to Franco by the Democratic Governments. It was too late: 'We shall make you pay for this last attempt at blackmail too: the victory in Spain is a Fascist victory and you will have to pay for it.' The 'Stampa' emphasises that Spain can face her reconstruction relying exclusively on her own resources, in close collaboration with those who were her allies in difficult times.²

Repeated to Paris.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported Italian press comments on the lines of those summarized above.

² The British and French Governments formally announced their decision to recognise the Government of General Franco on February 27.

No. 338

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 16, 11.50 a.m.)

No. 62 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 1096/7/22]

BERLIN, February 16, 1939

Rome telegram No. 96.¹

I agree with Lord Perth in regarding as significant that Italian press should publish this apparently old and certainly moderate German press article in respect of Italy's 'just claims' against France. My first impression here is that German Government is in fact backing Italy to that limit but no further.

It is in this connexion interesting to note that 'just claims' mentioned correspond exactly with what the Italian Ambassador on my return here described to me very confidentially (see my private letter to you of February 15²) as constituting real limit of Signor Mussolini's requirements.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of February 14 reported an article in the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' to the effect that due regard should be paid to the large Italian colony in Tunis; that the Suez Canal administration should be revised in Italian interests, and that Italy had a claim to a share in the administration of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railway.

² See Appendix I, Document (1).

No. 339

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 19, 5.50 p.m.)

No. 111 Telegraphic [R 1174/7/22]

ROME, February 19, 1939, 4.5 p.m.

Your telegram No. 81.¹

I called Count Ciano's attention to an article in 'Relazioni Internazionali' of February 11 which I said had received considerable publicity in my country. I quoted the latter part of the Prime Minister's statement of February 6 which I remarked had the general approbation of all parties. The article in question, I added, had appeared in the organ of Italian institution for study of international affairs, an institution which was of considerable importance since Signor Pirelli² was President and he himself had opened the institution with some ceremony a year or so ago. This article which threatened France with war if she did not make certain unspecified concessions caused great concern to my Government.

Count Ciano, who had been looking at the article, interrupted to say that as regards Spain³ Signor Mussolini and he stood as I knew firmly by pledges

¹ No. 336.

² Signor Alberto Pirelli, Minister of State and leading industrialist.

³ The article had stated *inter alia* that Italy would remain in Spain until General Franco had completely consolidated his position and France had made her policy clear.

contained in the Anglo-Italian Agreement and repeated to the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax.

I observed that it was not the Spanish part of the report which particularly perturbed me particularly [*sic*] but that about France. As he knew my Government was anxious to improve our relations with the Italian Government and to work with them for improvement of general relations in Europe. An article of this kind could certainly not be considered as helpful in either respect.

Minister for Foreign Affairs then read the whole of the article and said that it must be held to represent only the views of the writer. A differentiation must be made between the institution and the review. Italian Government had, as I was aware, no preventive censorship and they only acted in special cases after an article had appeared in the press. He found it somewhat curious when representatives of democratic countries came to him and complained of articles in the Italian press while if similar complaints were made by the Italian Government the freedom of the press was immediately given as a reason why nothing could be done. An article of this kind must be held to be on the same footing as articles appearing in France or England.

I remarked that at any rate the writers in Italy were not likely to take a line which they knew would be disapproved by the Government. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that he would neither confirm nor deny what the writer of the article had said. The official Italian position had been expressed in the Note⁴ addressed to the French Government and that stood by itself. I answered that I hoped that his refusal to deny did not mean that the Italian Government intended to threaten war with France if certain concessions were not granted.

Count Ciano repeated that the Note to France set out the position of the Italian Government; there was no threat of war in that Note and only Africa was mentioned in it, indeed it could not be said to be of an unfriendly character. The French press was still full of anti-Italian articles and what held good for France must hold good for Italy.

I observed that articles of this kind could not be helpful towards appeasement in Europe of which the Prime Minister had talked with Signor Mussolini, which the latter had apparently welcomed. Speaking purely personally I was not happy about the tone of the Italian press at the present time even towards my own country. Minister for Foreign Affairs asked if I had any specific complaints to make. I said that I had no definite article in mind but the whole attitude of the press towards Great Britain which was linked up with the other democracies could not be called friendly.

When I repeated that my Government trusted that he would do his utmost to use his influence to avoid further articles of the kind that I had mentioned appearing, Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he would take note of what I had said but that the question was difficult since the Italian feeling against France was running high in spite of the illusions cherished by French press that Italians loved the French.

⁴ See Volume III of this Series, No. 482.

No. 340

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 19, 5.0 p.m.)

No. 112 Telegraphic [R 1175/7/22]

ROME, February 19, 1939, 4.5 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I think that the conversation will prove useful, though I was a little perturbed by Count Ciano's refusal to confirm or deny the views expressed in the article. On reflection I feel, however, that it would have been extremely difficult for him to make any formal declaration, in the present circumstances, that the ultimate natural aspirations of Italy are directed only towards Africa and not also towards Corsica and Nice. He would, by doing so, if such declarations became known, forfeit support of all extreme elements of Fascist Party, and this in view of his future ambitions, he could hardly afford to do.

While there can obviously be no objection to a public statement about the Italian official position, both as regards Spain and Italian claims on France, I trust that the rest of Minister for Foreign Affairs' remarks will be treated as confidential, particularly that no mention of them will appear in either our or the French press.

¹ No. 339.

No. 341

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 115 Telegraphic [R 1213/399/22]

ROME, February 20, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

I discussed situation with my United States colleague this evening. He told me that he had received information today that 1902 class had now been called up as well as that of 1901; men of 1915 class had received orders where they were to go in case mobilization took place; further the men of the 1918 class had been called up which meant an anticipation of two months on the ordinary procedure.

Ambassador said that he had met recently an Italian civilian who had told him that there would be an Italian fleet mobilisation on March 2. Ambassador had remarked that he supposed this just meant naval manœuvres to which reply was 'you may call it manœuvres if you like'.

I gave Ambassador an account of my conversations with Count Ciano on Saturday and to-day. My colleague then read me a telegram which he had received from Paris giving account of views held by Signor Landini,¹ Press Counsellor of Italian Embassy at Paris. The latter, who had been in Paris

¹ The file copy of this telegram contains a note by Sir O. Sargent that Lord Perth subsequently explained that this information did not come directly from Signor Landini but from the latter's daughter.

for some ten years had recently been summoned to Rome. He had a long conversation with Signor Mussolini. Signor Landini had stated that Italian desiderata were

- (1) representation on the Suez Canal board and reduction of Canal dues.
- (2) A free port at Jibuti and arrangements for use of railway and
- (3) an arrangement for Italian colony in Tunis whereby they should be placed on the same footing as French citizens.

Signor Mussolini was most insistent on the latter point and was determined to realize his demands even at cost of war though Signor Mussolini was considerably less bellicose than Count Ciano. Signor Landini realized that this point was likely to be extremely difficult; indeed he thought risk of war so great that he had been considering sending his furniture back to Italy and taking a furnished apartment. Italian Government had repatriated many Italian subjects and were now anxious to bring back to Italy as many as possible of the 800,000 Italians in France particularly as a large number of these were of military age.

As regards Germany Signor Landini felt that Germany would not only stand by Italy if the latter were attacked but if Italy became involved in war.

I told Ambassador that I was very grateful for this information which sounded to me likely to be an accurate expression of Signor Mussolini's views; of course it might be—as had happened in 1935—that Signor Mussolini would surrender some of his claims in Tunis for compensation elsewhere. But Tunis was greatly in his mind and indeed before the Prime Minister's visit Count Ciano had told me that this was the point in [*sic ?* on] which Signor Mussolini intended to speak very frankly to Mr. Chamberlain. As to news about mobilization of fleet we discussed source from which it came and agreed that we should not place too great reliance on it.

We decided that as situation was so obscure we would keep as close contact as possible.

Any comments which my Naval Attaché or Military Attaché have to make will follow.

No. 342

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 120 Telegraphic [R 1243/7/22]

ROME, February 21, 1939, 8.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 115.¹

My Belgian colleague gave me this evening a summary of information which he had gathered from recent talks with various officials at Ministry of Foreign Affairs with whom he says he is on particularly good terms. He had been informed that the French Government now knew the scope of Italian claims. When I expressed some doubt and surprise he said that he assumed

¹ No. 341.

that this information had been conveyed to Paris through M. Baudouin.² The Ambassador said his informant had told him that the French were not likely to make difficulties about Jibuti or the Suez Canal particularly as no territorial question was involved but the problem of the position of Italian colonists in Tunis was serious. The French, said the official, cannot understand that we attach the greatest importance to this matter and that Signor Mussolini is determined at all costs to secure his desiderata even, if necessary, at the cost of war.

The Ambassador asked me if I thought the Italian Government claimed more than the indefinite confirmation of 1906³ Agreement. I replied I did not know; there was also the question of Italian emigration into Tunisia.

The official had further remarked that he did not himself think there was a serious danger of war but that of course one had to be prepared. He said Signor Mussolini was becoming more and more incensed against France and that as his irritation grew his demands might equally increase. He had instanced in this connexion 'naval parity' a reference which [? neither] the Ambassador nor I understood.

² On February 27 a copy of this telegram was sent to Sir E. Phipps with a request for any information which he might 'be able to obtain throwing light on this report'. M. Baudouin, Director of the Banque de l'Indo-Chine, had recently returned to Paris from a visit to Italy. On February 14 Sir E. Phipps had reported that: 'Despite the fact that M. Baudouin frequently visits Italy for business reasons, certain sections of the opposition press asserted that he had been sent to Italy on a special mission. I understand, however, that he was not entrusted by the Government with any mission, official or otherwise, but it is probable that he was asked to report on the atmosphere in Rome. I gather that he has brought back nothing very definite or important. None the less it is interesting to see that he is so convinced that Italy will not push matters to extremes, and that, by the autumn, it will be possible, and indeed necessary, for the Democratic Powers to take some constructive action, beginning with economic arrangements, in regard to Italy and Germany.'

³ The file copy of this telegram contains a note that 'presumably the agreement of 1896 is meant'.

No. 343

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 125 Telegraphic [R 1379/7/22]

ROME, February 22, 1939, 11.20 p.m.

You will no doubt have noticed the consensus of opinion set out in my telegrams Nos. 115¹ and 120,² as to what now constitutes Italian claims on the French. This fits in so accurately with all that Count Ciano has said to me on the subject that I cannot but feel that information is accurate. Further the claims would not constitute any violation of Anglo-Italian Agreement. But there is also emphasis laid on the point that Signor Mussolini feels so deeply on the question of the status of the Italian colony in Tunis that he is

¹ No. 341.

² No. 342.

prepared, if necessary, to go to war to obtain what he believes is justice for his Italians there. It is this to my mind that makes the situation serious, since I do not know whether the French realise that he definitely means business and is *most* unlikely to give way.

It is to my mind almost unthinkable that the whole world should go up in flames because France and Italy cannot agree about the status of the Italian colony in Tunis but knowing how deeply Signor Mussolini feels on the subject and if the negative attitude taken up by my French colleague is that of French Government the situation may easily become perilous. I wonder whether the time has not come when we should thrash out the whole matter with the French Government in order to avoid the possibility of such a catastrophe as to that which I have alluded. If we leave it until too late, I fear the situation may develop into a crisis when a settlement becomes far more difficult because it is likely to turn on 'prestige'.

No. 344

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 102 Telegraphic [R 1175/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 25, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 111 and 112.¹

I find Count Ciano's attitude thoroughly unsatisfactory.

2. You should, when you next have occasion to see him, express to him the surprise of His Majesty's Government at his refusal to disavow a statement that Italy was prepared to attack France if the latter did not make unspecified concession, or, given the exceptional powers of the Government where the press is concerned, apparently to take any action in regard to the journal in which this statement was published.

3. You might point out that this article should surely come under the category of special cases to which His Excellency referred in paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 111. The fact that it has not been officially disavowed by the Italian Government seems to deprive the latter of any right to plead 'self-defence' in justification of the reinforcement of Libya.

4. You should at the same time draw Count Ciano's attention to the most objectionable article in the Italian press reported in your telegram No. 45 Saving.² You should impress upon him that articles in this strain in papers such as the 'Giornale d'Italia' and 'Popolo d'Italia' provide ammunition for the critics of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, on which it is our desire steadily to build, and gravely embarrass the Prime Minister in his work for peace. You should add that I had intended myself to speak to the Italian Ambassador on this subject, but find that he is absent from London.

¹ Nos. 339-40.

² No. 337.

No. 345

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 27, 2.0 p.m.)

No. 131 Telegraphic [R 1338/7/22]

ROME, February 27, 1939, 1.35 p.m.

I had a short conversation with my French colleague on February 25. He said that in his view Italians did not any longer attach overwhelming importance to Jibuti or Suez Canal questions. I presume that he meant that French Government would not find it difficult to meet Italian desiderata on the two points.

On the other hand Italian Government were concentrating on Tunis and here stumbling block was likely to be Italian immigration. The general Italian demands would have an appearance of reasonableness but if unlimited Italian immigration to Tunis were allowed Italian increase was likely to be so large after two or three years that Signor Mussolini could claim fresh concessions on the ground of Italian preponderance. France could not compete with Italy as regards immigration. I suggested to him that perhaps this difficulty might be overcome by fixed quota or something of the sort. I felt that Signor Mussolini was really disturbed about the reports which were made to him, no doubt in a completely distorted and exaggerated form, about the hardships which Italian colonists were undergoing on account of their race, and once a fixed idea of this kind was implanted in his mind it was almost impossible to eradicate it. It was further a subject on which he would feel deeply. I added that what was troubling me personally was the present lack of contact between the two Governments.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 346

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 132 Telegraphic [J 816/33/66]

ROME, February 27, 1939, 8.30 p.m.

Tunis telegram No. 12.¹

Signor Bastianini² asked me to come to see him this evening and said that he had a communication to make to me. Information had reached Italian Government that the whole French military machine in North Africa was now in movement. Large tanks, artillery, munitions, stores and troops were being sent from Algeria to Tunis and movements were also taking place in Morocco. The whole movement was of such a kind that the Italian Government could no longer consider it as defensive but as preparation for offensive.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of February 25 from His Majesty's Consul at Tunis reported a widespread belief in Tunis that the military authorities were preparing for an immediate attack on Libya in the case of war with Italy.

² Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

If, Signor Bastianini said, this movement continues for two or three days more on present scale he must warn me that Italian Government would be forced to increase *very* largely their forces in Libya, much beyond the 62,000 men which Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs had mentioned to me. There must be a proportion between forces destined for defence and those for potential attack. He hoped that it would not be necessary for the Italian Government to take such steps but he had to inform me that they would be taken if French movements continued on something like their present scale and remarked they were combined with repressive action against Italian colonists in Tunis.

I said that I had in the first place one observation to make which I had already made on previous occasion to Count Ciano, namely, that it was in my Government's and my own view unthinkable that French intended to attack Libya. Signor Bastianini answered that French theory was apparently that Italian forces intended to attack Jibuti and that if this took place French would then attack Libya. He added that of course there was no idea of any such attack on Jibuti. I observed that of course if such an attack took place war must necessarily ensue and Signor Bastianini seemed to agree: he emphasized again however that further and considerable defence measures in Libya would be required if the French continued to take measures which the Italian Government could no longer consider as defensive. I remarked that as I had said to Minister for Foreign Affairs these increases although they were termed on each side defensive, might, if things continued as at present, reach almost astronomical figures. Signor Bastianini answered that no one more than himself regretted the necessity of such increases but defence must be provided.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 347

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 134 Telegraphic [R 1367/7/22]

ROME, February 28, 1939, 1.20 a.m.

Your telegram No. 81.¹

As Signor Bastianini had asked me to come to see him on another subject I took the opportunity of speaking to him on general terms about the article in 'Relazioni Internazionali' and other articles. I gave him a short account of my last interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the subject and said that I had been told that a fresh article attacking France had appeared in the review in question. I observed that he must be aware of our special relationship with France and pointed out that these articles not only severely hampered the Prime Minister's efforts for general appeasement, but also gave a handle to those who wished to attack the Anglo-Italian Agreement and Anglo-Italian friendship. We had been unpleasantly surprised by

¹ No. 336.

articles of Gayda and one of 'Popolo d'Italia' talking of British hypocrisy in connexion with the recognition of Franco. Count Ciano had always expressed his entire confidence in, and appreciation of, our truly neutral attitude in the Spanish affair. Such articles could not but do great harm.

Signor Bastianini replied that he had not read the new article in question. He produced the review with the pages uncut. He said that I must realise that there was today a state of tension between France and Italy. It was not practical for the Italian Government to lay down a limit beyond which writers must not go; as long as a tension existed journalists and others could hardly be restrained from giving vent to their personal feelings. He wished however that people would concentrate more on problems themselves than on what was written about them. Words were ephemeral, facts remained. I replied that while this might be true in one sense, words were very potent and necessarily must have a great effect on the treatment of facts.

With regard to what I had said of Prime Minister's difficulties Signor Bastianini remarked that Anglo-Italian relations were good and based on . . .² but that the Prime Minister's efforts for appeasement could not but suffer, (incidentally he remarked that he fully understood the nature of Anglo-French relations) from existing tension between France and Italy. He thought however that we attributed much more importance to the review about which I had spoken than it deserved or that it was given in Italy.

I remarked that there was always a possibility of a review or newspaper containing articles of such a kind being confiscated.

Signor Bastianini answered that the Government had this power but that it was no use exercising it once an article had received wide distribution. For instance this particular review was published at Milan and to confiscate it after it had reached subscribers would have the effect of calling particular attention to it.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 348

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 135 Telegraphic [R 1368/7/22]

ROME, February 28, 1939, 1.20 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I thought it wise to talk to Signor Bastianini on this subject as in Count Ciano's absence² he may be in touch with Signor Mussolini and therefore may mention to him what I said. It is impossible for me to tell whether representations which I make to Count Ciano ever come to Signor Mussolini's ears.

¹ No. 347.

² Count Ciano was in Warsaw. See No. 173.

No. 349

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received February 28, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 138 Telegraphic [R 1371/399/22]

ROME, February 28, 1939, 1.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 133.¹

Yugoslav Military Attaché told the Military Attaché on February 25 that he understood from German Military Attaché that both German and Italian military authorities were furious at measures taken recently and considered they were seriously crippling readiness for war of Italian army. Major [Trajanovic] had heard from the Italians that recall of 60,000 old reservists was entirely a social measure and had been thrust on soldiers by Fascist party to relieve unemployment. He thought that these reservists were being to a certain extent retrained, and that training cadres were wasting their time when they should be retraining potential first line troops.

Yugoslav Military Attaché added that German Assistant Military Attaché complained to him that he was given no information by the Italian War Ministry and far from receiving special treatment was treated worse than certain other Military Attachés. He had not been allowed to make certain visits to Italian units which he had asked for and written questions to the Ministry of War frequently remained unanswered.

Military Attaché is confident that his Yugoslav colleague was speaking in good faith and he knows that though he is a close personal friend of the German Assistant Military Attaché he is anti-German.

The remarks about the recall of reservists, the Military Attaché observes, fit in with other recent information, and he adds that it certainly would appear that by the end of next month when Italy will have 300,000 recruits on her hands, as well as 60,000 men of nearly 40 years old, she will not be in a position to go to war.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of February 28 reported a statement by an official in the Ministry of War to His Majesty's Military Attaché that the recall of the reservists was due to a desire to relieve unemployment.

No. 350

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 71 Telegraphic [R 1379/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, February 28, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram¹ was despatched before I had received Rome telegram No. 132.² From the latter you will see that the situation is beginning to drift dangerously and that the troop concentration race which we wish to see avoided may well become inevitable unless the matter is taken in hand. You should give M. Bonnet the substance of this

¹ No. 351.

² No. 346.

telegram as well as Tunis telegram No. 12,³ and suggest to him that if some action of the nature suggested in paragraph 3 of my telegram under reference is not taken without delay, the situation may in my opinion so deteriorate as to become very difficult to control.

Repeated to Rome.

³ Not printed. See No. 346, note 1.

No. 351

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 70 Telegraphic [R 1379/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 28, 1939, 2.30 p.m.*

1. In my speech in the House of Lords on February 23¹ I disclaimed any intention of mediating between the French and Italian Governments regarding Italian claims against the former, but this was, of course, not intended to signify that His Majesty's Government were disinterested in the present state of tension in Italo-French relations or in any efforts which might be made towards its abatement. This is far from being the case, since the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on February 6² shows that anything which affects vital French interests cannot but be of concern to His Majesty's Government. For this reason I am somewhat concerned that the Italian Government should be increasing their troops in Libya and that the French Government should be finding it necessary in reply to increase theirs in Tunisia.

2. It is not of course for His Majesty's Government to suggest to France how she ought to defend her vital interests in the Mediterranean if she considers them endangered, but it is clearly in the interests of both France and Great Britain that a troop concentration race should not be started unnecessarily in North Africa between Italy on the one side and France and Great Britain on the other. For this reason His Majesty's Government have refrained so far from adding to their forces in Egypt in answer to Italian reinforcements in Eastern Libya.

3. Without attempting to mediate between the French and Italian Governments on the actual points at issue between them, I am wondering whether the French Government would care to make use of our good offices to induce the Italian Government to refrain from further concentrations in return for some corresponding undertakings of a reasonable character on the part of the French Government.

4. I should be glad if you would put this suggestion to M. Bonnet as tactfully as possible and invite his views, not only on this particular development in Italo-French relations, but also on the general question as to how best our two Governments can co-operate in order to be ready for the new

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of L., vol. 111, cols. 936-42.

² See No. 94, note 1.

situation which is likely to develop after the recognition of General Franco's Government by Great Britain and France if Mussolini now proceeds to formulate his claims against France.

5. His Majesty's Government fully appreciate that the present situation has been brought about by Italy's recent unwarrantable behaviour. Nevertheless they feel, and they are sure that the French Government will agree with them in holding, that no reasonable opportunity should be neglected of improving the atmosphere and of exploring possible means of removing the present tension. In the spirit of the Prime Minister's declaration of February 6 His Majesty's Government confidently hope that in the event of Italian demands being formulated and presented in the near future, the French Government will take no decision as to their reply without prior consultation with His Majesty's Government.

6. In holding the above language to M. Bonnet you should hand him an *aide-mémoire* in the sense of the foregoing.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 352

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 1, 12.40 p.m.)

No. 79 Telegraphic [R 1388/7/22]

PARIS, March 1, 1939, 11.14 a.m.

Your telegram No. 71.¹

Minister and I having influenza, Mr. Mack handed yesterday evening to Ministry of Foreign Affairs memorandum based on above and on your telegram No. 70² and Rome telegram No. 132³ urging that it should be immediately laid before M. Bonnet. This was done.

This morning I rang up M. Bonnet to tell him of anxiety felt by His Majesty's Government in the matter.

His Excellency assured me that the French troop movements were merely reply to very large Italian concentration in Libya and would cease directly Italians stopped sending their large reinforcements. Italian Military Attaché has already been so informed.

My Military Attaché has been assured that the French measures in Tunisia are purely of a defensive nature. He learns moreover that all French troops are being kept back fifty kilometres from the frontier to avoid incidents (see enclosure in my despatch No. 266⁴ February 28).

M. Bonnet promises written reply in due course.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 350.

² No. 351.

³ No. 346.

⁴ Not printed. This despatch reported a statement by General Dentz to His Majesty's Military Attaché that there was 'no truth whatever' in the assertion (see No. 346) that the whole of the French military machine in North Africa had been put in motion.

Letter from Sir O. Sargent to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

[R 1388/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 1, 1939

In deciding to send you our telegrams 70¹ and 71² of the 28th February, we started off on the assumption that the French movements in Tunisia were purely of a defensive nature, taken in reply to the Italian threat as represented by recent reinforcements to Libya. Your telegram 79³ of to-day shows that M. Bonnet and the French Military authorities have both given assurances that this is their object.

If the line taken by the French Government had been that these movements were necessary in order to be in readiness for an immediate offensive against Libya, the matter would have to be looked at from a different angle. As it is, the apparent situation is that both the French and the Italians are getting more and more worked up and engaging in an indefinite competition in which each side is claiming to be merely answering the other. At first glance, it might appear that the fact that the first move came from the Italians gives the French a watertight case; but in sending you our telegrams 70 and 71 we were partly influenced by the feeling that this view does not take all the factors into account.

You will remember that Perth told us in his telegram 92⁴ of the 13th February that Ciano told him that the present garrison in Libya was not adequate for defence, that even when brought up to 62,000 men it would just be sufficient solely for defensive purposes, and that on Perth's repeating that any attack by France was unthinkable, Ciano referred to an article in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes'. He was told in reply that neither His Majesty's Government nor the Ambassador could believe that the Italian Government could rely on an irresponsible article of this kind. You will no doubt have seen General Armengaud's article⁵ to which Ciano was obviously referring; and you will probably agree with us that apart from the question of irresponsibility, the article in itself does amply confirm the exact words used by Ciano. General Armengaud says in substance that France can count on about 160,000 troops in Northern Africa without counting reservists and a potential million recruits and that there were then already 40,000 French troops close to the frontier. He went on to describe the line of advanced posts ('the strong points of Vauban') and the Maginot line behind these from Gabès to the northern Erg. Having set forth in detail the reasons for which any Italian attack would be held and broken on this line 100 kilometres from the frontier, the General went on to explain that in order to liberate for home defence the large potential reserves of man power by a rapid and decisive success, Libya should be mopped up 'de concert avec les Anglais' and held

¹ No. 351.² No. 352.³ This article appeared in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' on February 1, 1939.⁴ No. 350.⁵ No. 335.

for the duration of the war. He concluded that French Northern Africa was not in danger and that Italy was menacing France at a point where the Italians were weak and the French extremely strong.

The General maybe was writing irresponsibly when he discussed the desirability of France launching an attack on Libya from Tunisia, but was he not stating his facts quite correctly when he lays down that the French defences of Tunisia are so strong that France has nothing to fear from an Italian attack from Libya? If this is so, is there clearly any need for the French to pile up reinforcements in Tunisia because the Italians have increased, and indeed doubled, their garrison in Libya? Are not the French in thus playing up to the Italians really taking unnecessary action? On the face of it, there seems no need for them to indulge in all these troop movements in Tunisia merely in answer to the despatch of 30,000 men to Libya, for if General Armengaud's facts are accurate there can surely be no suggestion that this Italian increase has so altered the relative strengths as to make an Italian offensive against Tunisia (with Egypt, it must be remembered, on the other frontier) a real threat.

If, on the other hand, the French are not really worrying about the recent increase of the Libya garrison but are getting ready for an offensive of their own, then the question is an entirely different one. This, however, they have assured you is not the case.

We don't expect you to put the dilemma thus crudely to the French, but I thought that in any discussion with Bonnet you might find it useful to know how our minds had been working and to realise that one of the reasons why we have raised this question of the Tunis garrison was that we were not convinced that from the purely military point of view the security of Tunisia required that the French Government should at once respond in kind to Italy's recent increase of her troops in Libya.

O. G. SARGENT

No. 354

*Letter from the Earl of Perth (Rome) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received March 7)*

[R 1549/7/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, ROME, March 1, 1939

I dined last night with my French colleague and had a short conversation with him. He had taken advantage of Ciano's absence to go to the Palazzo Chigi to see Bastianini about some more or less routine matter and had, he told me, remarked incidentally that it seemed sad that there appeared little prospect of conversations beginning between France and Italy and that the question of who should make the first move seemed to him to be of little importance. He hoped that these remarks would be passed on to Mussolini but of course he did not know whether Bastianini would dare to do so.

2. I spoke to him about the dangers of the troop concentrations on either side but I fear without much effect, since he naturally put all the blame on the Italians and stated that the whole of the French forces in North Africa did not amount to more than 100,000 men. In spite of his visit to Bastianini which was a good move, he is, in speech at any rate, distinctly aggressive and hardly admits that the Italians have any grievances which require remedying.

3. Later I had a long conversation with my Yugoslav colleague who has just come back from Belgrade where he remained on to see the new Yugoslav Foreign Minister whom he knows extremely well. The latter had expressed his belief that Germany did not intend for the present to embark on adventures which were likely to lead to war. The danger point as he saw it centred more in Rome. He felt that the French now being assured of our full support were likely to take up an extremely stiff line with the Italians and indeed were out, as he expressed it, to humiliate them. He feared that this tendency, which we agreed was a dangerous one, was being encouraged by François-Poncet.

4. He was almost pathetically confident in the results of our increasing strength and when we talked of Bulgarian claims in southern Dobruja and the consequential danger of Hungarian claims on Rumania he observed that he hoped that a time would come when England would be sufficiently powerful to say which claims were admissible and which were not, and that if this happened, our verdict would ultimately be accepted.

PERTH

No. 355

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 106 Telegraphic [R 1368/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 2, 1939, 4.30 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 134¹ and 135.²

Notwithstanding your conversation with Signor Bastianini I trust you will approach Count Ciano on his return from Warsaw on the lines of my telegram No. 102.³

¹ No. 347.

² No. 348.

³ No. 344.

No. 356

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 85 Telegraphic [R 1461/7/22]

PARIS, March 2, 1939, 7.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 79.¹

I saw M. Bonnet about this today. He wants my Military Attaché to discuss the question of Italian effectives in Libya at the French Ministry of

¹ No. 352.

War again, which the Military Attaché will do tomorrow morning. French believe there are many more than 62,000 men in Libya.

Meanwhile M. Bonnet assures me that directly supplementary measures decided upon here on February 24 have been completed no further French reinforcements will be sent unless Italians send out more troops. I am to see him at 7 p.m. on March 3.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 357

Minute by Sir A. Cadogan

[R 1475/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 2, 1939*

The French Ambassador to-day referred in conversation with me to the communication¹ which we instructed Sir Eric Phipps to make the day before yesterday to the French Government on the subject of reinforcements in North Africa. M. Corbin said that speaking personally and confidentially he thought he had detected some nervousness in Paris as to what this might portend. I said that our communication had arisen simply from the fact that we were becoming somewhat anxious at the alternate increases in Italian and French forces in Libya and Tunis. We quite understood that owing to Italian behaviour it was necessary for the French to take all reasonable precautions and indeed we fervently hoped that they would do so. But it was undeniable that a race in military concentration might be just as dangerous and might just as easily get out of hand as a race in armament production. We had been anxious therefore to do anything that could be done to avert danger. We fully realised however that it was a delicate matter and for that reason the first step which we had taken was to ask the French Government whether they would like us to see whether there was anything that we could do in Rome to slow up Italian reinforcements.

M. Corbin said that speaking personally again he thought that his Government might imagine that we were contemplating getting into the position of mediating between Paris and Rome on this troop concentration question, and that from there we might go on to mediate in the questions at issue between the French and Italian Governments. I said that that had not been in our mind at all: we were simply concerned at possible dangers that might result from troop movements and were anxious to do anything that might be possible to avert the danger.

A. C.

¹ See No. 351.

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 3)

No. 276 [R 1457/7/22]

PARIS, March 2, 1939

My Lord,

I have received Your Lordship's despatch No. 462¹ of the 27th February enclosing a copy of a telegram from His Majesty's Ambassador at Rome reporting that the Belgian Ambassador in Rome had stated that the French Government now knew the scope of the Italian claims and that His Excellency assumed that this information had been conveyed to Paris through M. Baudouin.

2. I sounded M. Bonnet on this subject to-day, but he declared that he did not know what the Italian demands might be. His Excellency added that it would be impossible to begin conversations with the Italians until all the Italian troops had left Spain.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Rome.

I have, &c.,
ERIC PHIPPS

¹ Not printed. The telegram referred to was No. 342.

Minute from Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Sir E. Phipps¹

[R 1528/7/22]

PARIS, March 2, 1939

The Ambassador.

While with M. Léger this afternoon, I asked him what were his impressions about Count Ciano's visit to Warsaw. He said that on present information he thought it had been a disappointment for Italy. He said also that the phrase in the joint communiqué about the maintenance of order and justice had been put in by M. Beck, because of the riots in Poland, which had really been directed against him (M. Beck) and towards which his colleagues and the military and police authorities had shown great complaisance. (This seems to me rather far-fetched.)

Turning then to Italy, he proceeded to speak for half an hour rather strongly against the *démarche* by His Majesty's Government over the despatch of French reinforcements to Tunisia. Lord Perth, after conversation with Signor Bastianini, had spoken to M. François-Poncet, on the line that the French action was creating considerable tension—as if, M. Léger said, it was the French who had started these measures and not the Italians. He did not know how Lord Perth had represented the matter to His Majesty's Government, but certainly our Note made a curious impression on the French from

¹ This minute was transmitted by Sir E. Phipps under a formal cover to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 7.

the psychological point of view. Care was being taken not to let our *démarche* become public, because of the effect it might have here. It looked as if His Majesty's Government were trying to put the brake on the French, but this was not a case of the Czechs and the Sudetens:—it was the Italians who needed to have the brake applied to them. Our action almost gave the impression that if, the French having reinforced Tunisia, any trouble arose between France and Italy, His Majesty's Government would to a certain extent attenuate the degree of their solidarity (*se désolidariser à un certain degré*) with the French in the matter. Italy could not face a war, and knew it. It was, however, highly probable she was thinking that she might risk a raid either at Jibuti or in Tunisia (or even in Egypt), and then say to the French: 'Now let's talk'. The important thing was to remove this temptation from the Italians. The best way to do it was to take steps which would make it clear to them that a mere raiding operation could not succeed. Such steps the French had taken at Jibuti, and were taking in Tunisia. At Jibuti they could now hold out at any rate for a month (the military authorities thought for two months). In Tunisia what they were doing was considered adequate, although they were only sending 50 per cent. of what the Italians were sending. These measures backed up the very definite stand taken by the French Government, to the effect that any attempt at a *coup* by Italy would mean war. There was no possibility of the French Government modifying this stand. It was a question of national sentiment. Herr Hitler did not want to be drawn into any war, but if Italy became involved in one he could not refuse to support Signor Mussolini, not only because of the solidarity between the two men, but also because if Fascism foundered it would be a disastrous blow for Nazism. Herr Hitler would therefore only push at a door which had been half opened by somebody else. If His Majesty's Government and the French Government made the mistake of allowing the temptation to Signor Mussolini to speculate upon a raid to subsist, it would be we who had opened that door. But Herr Hitler hoped to find it shut. M. Léger had not spoken to M. Daladier on the subject of our Note, and did not know what the answer would be, but he thought that the French Government would draw our attention to the psychological impression made by our enquiry and the importance of removing any temptation from Signor Mussolini.

Turning to Germany, M. Léger said that he was convinced that Herr Hitler was not thinking of the Ukraine. He had told this to the King of Roumania on his journey through Paris, though the latter had been convinced that this was Germany's immediate aim. M. Léger had said that the Germans were now thinking of the intermediate countries in which they might hope to secure the position they wanted without a war. The Ukraine would only come at a second or third stage. In any case, their aims towards the East were only steps towards their aims in the West. In the meantime, they would wish to consolidate their bases already gained in Central Europe and pursue their plans for securing the position they desired in Roumania, Poland, etc. They might not succeed, and any time gained gave us a chance to prevent them from succeeding, for proof of Anglo-French solidarity and

firmness would encourage the 'intermediate countries' to resist. The suggestion² of His Majesty's Government that France should relieve Franco-Italian tension by refraining from sending reinforcements to Tunisia might therefore have the opposite effect to that which was intended, and precipitate a situation which, as far as Germany was concerned, seemed improbable, and certainly undesired.

R. I. CAMPBELL

² The file copy of this minute contains a note by Sir O. Sargent that His Majesty's Government had not made this suggestion.

No. 360

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 3, 6.45 p.m.)

No. 86 Telegraphic [J 989/33/66]

PARIS, March 3, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 85.¹

Assistant Military Attaché in the course of interview at Ministry of War this morning was informed that they evaluate present Italian strength in Libya at 86,000 men of whom 20,000 have arrived there this year. In particular the French regard as dangerous the fact that Italian force is provided with a framework in the form of the two Metropolitan army corps with corps troops which would become a powerful instrument of war by mere addition of reservists.

Above figures were given very confidentially to my Military Attaché.

I am only to see M. Bonnet tomorrow morning as this afternoon he is kept in the Senate.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 356.

No. 361

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 6)

No. 195 [R 1516/399/22]

ROME, March 3, 1939

My Lord,

It may be of interest to Your Lordship to have recorded in one short despatch a list of the various visits which members of the Embassy staff have made to different parts of Italy in recent weeks and of the impressions they have derived therefrom as regards war preparations in this country. In existing circumstances I have thought it well to encourage such visits as far as practicable and you will notice that the country has been fairly well 'combed' geographically.

2. From January 16 to 26 the Military Attaché, accompanied by the Assistant Military Attaché, made a ten days tour of military units in Northern

Italy during which they were received at the Army Corps Headquarters at Bologna, Turin, Milan and Bolzano and visited various schools and units including the Staff College at Turin, the 5th Alpini Regiment at Merano and the 62nd Motorised Infantry Regiment at Trento. They kept a careful lookout for any signs of special preparations for war and saw nothing which pointed to any extraordinary activity.

3. From January 21 to 23 Mr. Yencken visited Naples and talked to various people there and at the beginning of February after visiting Capri, he went on to the Amalfi coast and visited various towns in Campania and Calabria. There he found nothing to report except friendliness and sunshine, a certain anxiety about dangerous policies and a definite distaste for all forms of undue activity, including working in labour gangs in Libya and war.

4. From February 13 to 22 Mr. Grey visited Sicily during which time though he kept mainly to the coast roads he saw nothing which appeared to him to indicate any unusual naval, military or air activities.

5. From February 19 until March 1, the Commercial Counsellor made a tour of the cities of the industrial north. By arrangement the Vice-Consul at Spezia joined his train there and travelled with him as far as Rapallo which gave them time for a good talk. Mr. Nosworthy then visited in turn Genoa, Turin, Milan, Venice and Trieste. He found that the anti-air raid precautions were still almost non-existent: nothing serious appeared to have been done since the September crisis to provide air raid shelters or gas masks. He states that, as reported in Rome despatch No. 186 E¹ of March 2, from the enquiries he made, there seems to be no question now that, with the possible exception of benzine, the available supplies of all raw materials are at a lower level than at any time since the Ethiopian war. From experts in the individual branches of industry he received the same story all along the line; stocks of coal, rubber, asbestos, copper, cotton and wool in the hands of the industrialists have been brought down to a point at which even the present low level of production can barely be maintained; while the level of the Government's reserves must equally be low for there seems to be no doubt that imports for the Government's account are in fact entered at the customs and are included amongst the statistical returns.

6. Today, March 3, the Naval Attaché arrived in Spezia by arrangement with the Ministry of Marine in order to pay courtesy calls on the Admiral and Senior Naval Officers there.

7. The Air Attaché, who returned from London yesterday, on his way back spent some days visiting the six biggest aeroplane factories in Italy, namely, the Breda and Caproni factories at Milan, the Savoia-Marchetti at Sesto Calendi, the Fiat aeroplane and aero-engine factories at Turin and the Piaggio Aeroplane Factory at Finale Ligure. He found none of them working at more than the normal forty hours per week and that at two of them and also possibly at the air- [*sic* ? aero] engine factory at Turin, there had been a reduction in the number of employees since last year. As far as he could see there appeared to be no intention of speeding up at all, and all of the factories

¹ Not printed.

seemed desperately anxious to get foreign orders. At the Piaggio factory for instance though they had enough work on hand to keep them occupied they were anxiously wondering what would happen when their present contracts ran out. The only increase of activity he noticed was at the Savoia-Marchetti factory which is occupied with replacement orders for Ala Littoria and actively developing the civil air line side of the business. The Air Attaché found that there was everywhere a shortage of steel and this seemed to be particularly hampering in production of air [*sic* ? aero] engines. He is of course submitting a technical report on his visit, as well as a report on the general impressions he gained during his tour.

8. I might add that next week the Military Attaché will also visit Sicily, where it has been arranged for him to call upon the local military command, and where he will also take the opportunity to visit His Majesty's Consular Officers, and as far as practicable the interior of the island not visited by Mr. Grey.

9. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Cairo.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

No. 362

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 4, 1.30 p.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic [R 1483/7/22]

PARIS, March 4, 1939, 12.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 86.¹

French Government will send us next week their reply in writing to my *aide-mémoire*.² Meanwhile however, I have seen the Minister for Foreign Affairs who authorises [*sic*] His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome to inform Count Ciano that French Government do not dream of attacking Italians in Libya or anywhere else. Lord Perth may add that if Italians abstain from sending any further re-inforcements the French will likewise abstain.

I pointed out to M. Bonnet that French military leaders, including General Gamelin, had always expressed to me their complete confidence in being able to deal with any Italian attack upon Tunis and I quoted article by French General in 'Revue Des Deux Mondes' recently advocating an attack on Libya.

M. Bonnet admitted that French position in Tunis was strong; but he believes that Italians have about twice as many troops in Libya as the French have in Tunis.

His Excellency points out that it is absurd for Italians to pretend to fear a French attack considering that the latter have no claims against Italy, whereas Italian press continue to advance fantastic claims against France.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 360.

² See No. 352. For the text of the French reply see No. 365.

No. 363

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 5, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 158 Telegraphic [R 1486/7/22]

ROME, March 5, 1939, 12.15 a.m.

Your telegram No. 102.¹

I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs as instructed this morning² but my language did not produce any alteration in his attitude. He repeated that article in 'Relazioni Internazionali' only represented the views of the writer and did not bind anyone else. As regards the two other articles he said that he was sorry such attacks had appeared on Great Britain but what was he now to do—to confiscate at this stage would be without effect and only call particular attention to the articles in question. He stated that he considered that we paid too great attention to press writers, far more than was given to them in Italy.

As to the last sentence of your telegram Minister for Foreign Affairs simply remarked that Signor Grandi had come to Rome for three days. See my telegram No. 147.³

¹ No. 344.

² This telegram was drafted on March 4.

³ Not printed. This telegram of March 2 referred to a report that Signor Grandi's appointment as Ambassador in London would shortly be terminated.

No. 364

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 5, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 160 Telegraphic [R 1487/7/22]

ROME, March 5, 1939, 5.25 p.m.

Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 89.¹

I should, of course, be quite willing to arrange for Sir N. Charles (I have a slight attack of influenza) to see Ciano and convey M. Bonnet's assurances to him. But I fail to understand why M. Bonnet does not give instructions to French Ambassador here to act in this sense. It seems to me that such a message might possibly establish new contacts and fresh possibilities.

As far as I can tell Italian press is considerably calmer; you will remember that at the time of beginning of Anglo-Italian conversations question arose whether we should make cessation of press attacks a preliminary condition to conversations. You decided against it and on day when conversations began the attacks more or less ceased. I think that the French would be wise to bear this precedent in mind.

¹ No. 362.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 9)**No. 293 [R 1584/7/22]*

PARIS, March 8, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a Note dated March 8 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 365

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES.

PARIS, le 8 mars, 1939

Par un aide-mémoire en date du 28 février dernier, l'Ambassade d'Angleterre a bien voulu donner connaissance au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères d'une communication faite, le 27 février, à l'Ambassadeur de Sa Majesté britannique à Rome par M. Bastianini. Faisant état des dispositions militaires que la France prendrait en Tunisie, M. Bastianini faisait prévoir que le Gouvernement italien serait contraint d'augmenter lui-même très considérablement ses forces en Libye. L'Ambassade d'Angleterre mentionnait d'autre part que les concentrations de troupes françaises opérées en Tunisie étaient considérées sur place comme répondant à l'éventualité d'une contre-attaque immédiate sur la Libye, dans le cas où les hostilités viendraient à éclater.

2. A la lumière de ces informations, il paraît au Gouvernement britannique que la situation en Afrique du Nord tend à évoluer dangereusement. Il est amené, dans ces conditions, à se demander s'il ne devrait pas s'employer à obtenir du Gouvernement italien que celui-ci s'abstienne de nouvelles concentrations, en contrepartie de certaines dispositions correspondantes, de caractère raisonnable, que prendrait le Gouvernement de la République. Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté exprime également le désir de connaître la manière de voir du Gouvernement français, non seulement sur cet aspect particulier des relations franco-italiennes mais également sur la situation qui se développera le jour où les exigences italiennes seront ouvertement formulées. Et il espère que le Gouvernement de la République ne prendra pas position à l'égard de ces dernières sans consultation préalable avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté.

3. Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l'honneur en premier lieu d'attirer toute l'attention de l'Ambassade d'Angleterre sur le fait que l'augmentation des effectifs français en Tunisie n'est qu'une conséquence directe des mesures dont le Gouvernement italien a pris l'initiative en renforçant constamment, depuis le début de 1939, ses forces militaires en Libye. Le Gouvernement français a tenu exactement informé le Gouvernement anglais des mesures militaires que, dans un seul but de précaution, il s'est trouvé dans l'obligation d'adopter. La portée exacte des dispositions prises du côté français ressort d'ailleurs de la comparaison des forces se trouvant respectivement en Tunisie

et en Libye. Alors que les effectifs totaux accumulés en Libye approchaient, à la fin de février, de 100.000 hommes, les forces françaises en Tunisie ne comprenaient à la même époque que 35.000 hommes environ, portés depuis lors à 42.000. Le chiffre total des effectifs français stationnés dans la Régence reste donc à un niveau très inférieur à celui des unités italiennes et cette disproportion suffit en tout état de cause à écarter toute possibilité d'intention offensive de la part des autorités militaires françaises.

4. Le Gouvernement français ne doute pas au surplus que la situation créée en Libye n'ait amené les autorités égyptiennes à envisager un dispositif analogue de sécurité.

5. Les mesures militaires prises par le Gouvernement français ne constituent donc qu'une réponse aux mesures beaucoup plus importantes décidées par le Gouvernement italien. Si celui-ci cessait d'augmenter ses forces en Libye, le Gouvernement français cesserait également de renforcer son dispositif de défense.

6. Quant à la position générale du Gouvernement de la République à l'égard des revendications que le Gouvernement de Rome jugerait devoir présenter, elle a été définie à plusieurs reprises, notamment devant le Parlement français, avec la plus grande netteté, et par le Président du Conseil et par le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères.

7. Le Gouvernement français est persuadé — et il ne doute pas que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté ne partage sa conviction — que la fermeté de cette position constitue dans les circonstances présentes la garantie nécessaire du maintien de la paix. Toute apparence de concession aux manœuvres d'intimidation dont il est l'objet ne ferait qu'encourager le Gouvernement italien à les poursuivre et à formuler des exigences dont M. Mussolini supposerait à tort la France résignée à les subir plutôt qu'à leur résister.

8. En formulant les observations qui précèdent, le Gouvernement de la République tient à confirmer qu'il ne manquera pas de tenir les Autorités britanniques régulièrement et complètement informées de la nature et de l'étendue des dispositions militaires prises en Afrique du Nord, comme il est résolu à conserver avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté britannique, en toute éventualité, le contact le plus étroit et le plus confiant.

G[EOORGES] B[ONNET]

No. 366

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 80 Telegraphic [R 1584/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 11, 1939, 6.50 p.m.*

Your despatch No. 293¹.

In view of the unfounded suspicions which my offer of cooperation seems to have aroused in certain quarters, I should be quite content to leave the

¹ No. 365.

matter alone, if that is what M. Bonnet would prefer. You may therefore tell M. Bonnet verbally that I am obliged to him for his Note, and that I have no wish to quarrel with the main facts and arguments which he sets forth. (There may be a divergence of opinion regarding the precise number of Italian troops in Libya, and I cannot accept the statement in paragraph 4 of the Note regarding the action of the Egyptian Government. But these are minor points which you need not stress.)

2. You should at the same time repeat to M. Bonnet, as I presume you did in your *aide-mémoire*, that the reason why I made my proposal was to be found, as stated in the first paragraph of my telegram No. 70,² in the fact that as a result of the Prime Minister's statement of the 6th February 'anything which affects vital French interests cannot but be of concern to His Majesty's Government.'

3. M. Bonnet did, however, as indicated in the first paragraph of your telegram No. 89,³ suggest that His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome might inform Count Ciano that the French Government do not dream of attacking the Italians in Libya or anywhere else, and that he might add that if the Italians abstain from sending any further reinforcements, the French would likewise abstain. If M. Bonnet should still desire such a communication to be made to the Italian Government and considers that it would be suitable to do it through the intermediary of His Majesty's Government rather than direct to the Italian Government, I would of course be ready to instruct Lord Perth to make it. In that event I should be anxious to ensure that the matter was presented to Count Ciano in a manner agreeable to M. Bonnet. If the latter, therefore, should indicate any wish for Lord Perth to speak on the lines suggested in your telegram No. 89, you should tell him that, subject to his concurrence, I would propose that Lord Perth should proceed on the following lines:—

4. He should inform Count Ciano that His Majesty's Government hoped the Italian Government would examine the possibility of returning as far as possible to the position in Libya as contemplated in the Anglo-Italian Exchange of Notes of last year. He should go on to say that if the present large garrison is maintained in Libya it is bound to lead to corresponding increases in the French garrison in Tunisia, since the original Italian initiative in increasing the Libyan garrison is naturally, in view of the recent attitude of the Italian press, interpreted as an attempt to exercise pressure on France through Tunisia. Lord Perth might then quote the observation made by M. Bonnet in the last sentence of your telegram No. 89 and proceed to indicate that it is open to the Italian Government to stop this race in troop concentrations by reaching an understanding with the French Government regarding garrisons in Libya similar to that reached with Great Britain last year. At this point Lord Perth might convey to Count Ciano the assurances contained in the first paragraph of your telegram No. 89.

Repeated to Rome, No. 115.

² No. 351.

³ No. 362.

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 588 [R 1644/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 11, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador to-day I told His Excellency I had been disturbed to learn that there had been some slight danger of misunderstanding on the part of the French Government of the purpose of our recent approach to them in regard to the situation in North Africa. If there were any such misunderstanding, I hoped I could readily and quickly remove it.

2. We had, as M. Corbin knew, no intention whatever of intruding ourselves into the questions arising between Italy and France, and we were very well aware of the degree to which Italy was responsible for the tension that had arisen.

3. At the same time, we could not but regard the situation with a good deal of concern, having regard to our own relations with France, and it had occurred to us that, whereas it was probably impossible for the French Government to take any action in Rome, it might very well be easier for us to say a word in Rome that might possibly be useful in checking further developments. We were, I thought, sending a telegram¹ to the French Government to-day, making it plain that, if they wished us not to proceed any further, we should certainly concur in their view, but if, on the other hand, they thought, as M. Bonnet had intimated in a previous telegram² that we might possibly make some cautious representation at Rome, we should also in this case be glad to do as they suggested.

4. M. Corbin thanked me for what I had said and assured me that he did not think there had been any serious misunderstanding. The French Government had, however, thought that there might be some danger of the suggestion leading the Italian Government to feel that methods of bluff and intimidation were beginning to succeed, and it was, therefore, necessary all the time to recollect the fact of the particular Italian psychology. From the French point of view the native population of Tunis, and indeed of all North Africa, were watching the struggle between France and Italy; they understood only concrete facts, and, if the French were seen to be making too great practical concessions, the result on the native population and on the whole future of French North Africa would be very serious.

5. Speaking personally, M. Corbin said that, provided the atmosphere was less strained and it was really possible to look forward to good relations, he did not think it ought to be too difficult to settle Jibuti and possibly the Suez Canal. The Tunis question was the real problem and it was very hard to see what more the French Government could give than had been included in the agreement made by M. Laval.

¹ See No. 366.² See No. 362.

6. In a short reference to the question of the Spanish refugees in France, M. Corbin said that his Government were duly grateful for the assistance proffered by His Majesty's Government.³ It was a very heavy burden on France, and there seemed no early prospect of relief from it.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

³ His Majesty's Government had expressed their willingness to contribute towards the relief of the Spanish refugees in France. Mr. R. A. Butler announced on March 20 the decision to grant £50,000 for this purpose. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 882-3.

No. 368

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 3.40 p.m.)

No. 100 Telegraphic [R 1661/7/22]

PARIS, March 13, 1939, 12.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 80.¹

I made verbal communication to Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning repeating what I had already put in my *aide-mémoire*, that reason for your proposal was Prime Minister's statement on February 6 that anything which affects vital French interests cannot but be of concern to His Majesty's Government.

I then asked M. Bonnet whether he would not prefer that proposed communication to Italian Government should be made direct through French Ambassador in Rome. He greatly preferred that it should be made by Lord Perth in following terms: M. Bonnet has told Sir E. Phipps:—

1. That France has no intention of attacking Italy in Libya or anywhere else.

2. That French preparations in Tunis are simply a reply to heavy Italian concentrations of troops in Libya. If latter continue the French must do the same but French are quite ready to stop their concentration of troops and war material if Italians stop theirs.

3. That it is absurd to think of any possibility of an attack by French as they have no claims against Italy, with whom they wish to live in peace.

M. Bonnet prefers that no suggestion should be made to Italian Government by Lord Perth that they should reach an understanding with French Government regarding garrison in Libya similar to that reached with Great Britain last year.

His Excellency is anxious that impression should not be conveyed to Italians that he has asked for our intervention in this matter. Lord Perth might open by saying that I had been instructed to draw attention of French Government to the big concentrations both in Tunis and in Libya and that above was substance of French reply. He can of course base his remarks upon Anglo-Italian Exchange of Notes of last year.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 366.

No. 369

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 179 Telegraphic [R 1691/7/22]

ROME, March 13, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 115.¹

I feel some hesitation in putting forward to Count Ciano suggestion in the last paragraph that Italy could stop the race in concentrations by reaching an understanding with the French Government regarding the garrisons in Libya similar to that reached with Great Britain last year. Might not this be considered by the Italian Government as a suggestion for an unilateral renunciation on their part in return for no compensating concession on the part of the French? They might be led to ask for some embarrassing *quid pro quo*.

¹ No. 366 was repeated to Rome as telegram No. 115.

No. 370

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 392 [R 1692/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 13, 1939

My Lord,

I asked the Italian Ambassador to pay me a visit on Saturday on his return from Rome. I began by asking Count Grandi how he judged European prospects. The Ambassador replied that he thought them good, and that it was unwise to be unduly disturbed by superficial symptoms. The fundamental fact was that nobody wanted war.

2. I said that that would be completely reassuring if one could believe that wars only came of deliberate choice. My anxiety, however, arose from the fact that, as I read history, wars had happened not so much because people wanted them as because they had got into a position from which there was no other issue.

3. And it was for this reason that I told the Ambassador, speaking with complete frankness, that I was concerned about what seemed to me a deterioration in the atmosphere since the Prime Minister and I had visited Rome. Then Signor Mussolini had assured us that he hoped to settle with France as soon as Spain was out of the way, and that, meanwhile, it was his intention to do nothing to aggravate the situation. But the attitude of the press had grown steadily worse and, whatever the Italian Government might feel about the French press—and I was quite prepared to believe that there was much to be said on that subject—that did really not excuse the publication in the Italian press of actual threats of war. I could not conceal from the Ambassador my concern that, when asked to disavow such expressions of policy and opinion, Count Ciano had expressed his inability to do so. This seemed to me the more disturbing, inasmuch as I presumed it was correct to

believe that the Italian press would not take a particular and definite line upon matters of high policy which they knew to be distinctly uncongenial to the Government.

4. The Ambassador replied to this by saying that we were constantly apt to misunderstand the position in totalitarian States. The leaders of those States were under the necessity of considering public opinion, just as much as His Majesty's Government might be here. It would perhaps surprise me to know that the demonstration at the end of November in the Italian Chamber had in no way been planned or sanctioned by the Italian Government, but, once the demonstration had occurred, it was very difficult for the Italian Government publicly to disavow it, for this placed them in a false position before their own public opinion, which would not easily understand that such a demonstration could, in fact, have taken place unsanctioned.

5. For the same reason, the Ambassador hoped that we should not pay too much attention either to the press or to the reluctance of the Italian Government to disavow particular expressions of opinion. It was unhappily the case that grouping of Powers on ideological lines had taken place; perhaps it was inevitable; but let us not exaggerate its consequences. The visit of the Prime Minister and of myself to Rome had been warmly welcomed by both the Italian Government and people, and His Excellency did not hesitate to say that the feeling of the Italian Government towards this country had not only not deteriorated but was even warmer than it had been. It was impossible, however, to exaggerate the mischief that was done by the French press, for example, starting fictitious stories about the diminution in Count Ciano's influence. The Ambassador merely quoted this as an example to say that it was totally untrue. Count Grandi's general attitude was, as always, most friendly and, if one had no other sources of information by which to estimate the different currents that are flowing, it would, no doubt, be possible to extract from his conversation a more complete measure of reassurance.

6. Before he left, Count Grandi expressed his great regret that he would be perforce absent from London during the time of the forthcoming visit of the French President. This was particularly unfortunate, but was quite unavoidable. He had to take some oath in the Italian Legislature, the Fascist Grand Council was to meet, and he, therefore, could not help himself.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 371

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 118 Telegraphic [R 1661/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 100.¹

You should approach Italian Government on lines suggested by M. Bonnet. Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 368.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 186 Telegraphic [R 1796/7/22]

ROME, March 16, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 118.¹

Counsellor spoke to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the terms suggested by M. Bonnet in Sir E. Phipps telegram No. 100² to the Foreign Office. Counsellor said that as the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs knew that [*sic*] His Majesty's Government had been much concerned at the increase of the troops in Libya and for that reason the matter had been raised with Count Ciano through this Embassy. Count Ciano had said that the Italian action was entirely inspired by the size of the French preparations in Tunis but that the Italian Government had no aggressive intentions against France. On the strength of this statement His Majesty's Government had instructed Sir E. Phipps to speak to M. Bonnet regarding the possible dangers of both countries concentrating large armed forces on each side of the frontier. His Majesty's Ambassador had duly seen M. Bonnet who had replied in the terms quoted by Sir E. Phipps.

Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs listened carefully to what M. Bonnet had said. He did not seem favourably impressed and replied that in taking note of M. Bonnet's words he wished emphatically to state that Italy had brought down the numbers of her troops in Libya to some thirty thousand men in accordance with the agreement of April 16 and that they had been forced to increase their strength because of the scale on which France was concentrating her troops in Tunis. Counsellor said that so far as His Majesty's Embassy knew France did not have a large number of troops in Tunisia, whereupon Count Ciano said that we should remember that whereas the population of Libya was only one million, France had a tremendous population in North Africa out of which France could create a formidable army. Italian Government must, he said, redress the balance which was too one-sided at the moment. On being prompted he said he would repeat that the Italian Government had no warlike designs on Tunis whatsoever. He said that he had been interested to receive our assurances regarding the numbers of troops in Egypt, so the Counsellor considered it expedient to give the Minister for Foreign Affairs the gist of your telegram No. 117.³

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 371.

² No. 368.

³ Not printed. In this telegram of March 14 (9.45 p.m.) Lord Perth was instructed to remind Count Ciano, if he again referred to the strength of the British forces in Egypt, that their numbers were limited by treaty with Egypt to 10,000 troops, 400 pilots, and the 'necessary and ancillary personnel', and that, if, in consultation with the Egyptian Government, His Majesty's Government had recently sent any formed units to Egypt, they would have informed the Italian Government in conformity with the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

No. 373

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 93 Telegraphic [R 1796/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1939, 5.50 p.m.*

Rome telegram No. 186.¹

Please communicate report of this interview to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and inform him that, subject to his views, we would propose to instruct Lord Perth to inform Count Ciano that we cannot but regard the attitude of the Italian Government as unreasonable and that we greatly regret the conclusion which we are bound to draw that they are unwilling to co-operate in allaying tension in North Africa. At the same time we are glad to take formal note of Count Ciano's reiterated assurance that the Italian Government have no warlike designs on Tunis whatsoever.

Repeated to Rome No. 123.

¹ No. 372.

No. 374

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 20, 3.30 p.m.)

No. 195 Telegraphic [R 1839/7/22]

ROME, *March 20, 1939, 3.20 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 123.¹

I venture to doubt the wisdom of the first part of the course proposed in your telegram No. 123 to Paris.²

To tell Count Ciano that we cannot but regard the attitude as unreasonable is not likely to produce any effect beyond irritation, while if we say we cannot but conclude that the Italian Government are unwilling to co-operate in allaying tension in North Africa, may not the Minister for Foreign Affairs reply that he is willing to reduce Italian forces in Libya if the French will restore the *status quo* as regards Tunis, an offer which I gather would not be welcome to M. Bonnet.

On the other hand I strongly favour taking formal note of the Minister for Foreign Affairs' assurances that Italy has no warlike designs on Tunis.³

¹ No. 373. ² This should read No. 93 to Paris (or No. 123 to Rome) (No. 373).

³ This telegram was repeated to Paris by the Foreign Office on March 20.

No. 375

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 196 Telegraphic [R 2012/7/22]

ROME, *March 21, 1939, 1.0 a.m.*

Is it not desirable that at the present juncture a clear distinction should be drawn between the wholly illegitimate actions of Germany and compara-

tively legitimate aspirations of Italy, see my telegram No. 125¹, and that the press and public statements in Great Britain and France should not lumber [*sic* ? lump] together Germany's absorption of Czecho-Slovakia in defiance of all promises and decencies and Italian case and [*sic* ? for] certain satisfaction from France? I do not of course exclude the possibility that Signor Mussolini is capable of behaving just as outrageously as Hitler but to take it for granted that he will so behave may be the most likely way of making him feel that only by so doing can he attain what he probably regards as his justifiable ends.

There seems to be no doubt that the extinction of Czecho-Slovakia has badly shaken both public opinion and governing circles here. In spite of Gayda's vehement defence of German action coupled with the usual attacks on us and the French rearmaments the Italian press has been allowed to print the British and French announcements of that action. There must inevitably be increased Italian anxiety about Trieste and Trentino and about Italian and Signor Mussolini's interests in the Balkans. No rift in the Axis will be allowed to appear, but under the surface there may well be the makings of one. If this is so it would be foolish of us to close it by forcing Signor Mussolini to swallow his doubts and scruples and to commit himself far less [*sic*] than more irretrievably to a policy of 100 per cent. support of Germany which will probably end by Italy becoming another German protectorate? I expect at the bottom of his heart Signor Mussolini feels much as the Prime Minister does, see Birmingham speech.²

Could we not show Signor Mussolini that German method is not the only one that pays? Is it not possible to settle the Italian case by consultation and compromise? If it were feasible for either the French Government or ourselves, or both, to give Signor Mussolini public or private assurances that his claims will be given fair consideration, it would be more difficult for him to adopt violent measures in face of his own public opinion. If however Signor Mussolini despairs of settlement by negotiations he may feel popular discontent requires him to take up an attitude perhaps in his speech next Sunday which will render an amicable solution practically impossible. In this connexion, see also my telegrams Nos. 197³ and 198.⁴

¹ No. 343.

² See No. 308, note 1.

³ Not printed. See No. 376, note 2.

⁴ No. 376.

No. 376

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 198 Telegraphic [C 3633/19/18]

ROME, March 20, [*sic*]¹ 1939, 1.0 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.²

Italians have received a severe shock from the events in Czecho-Slovakia but it is not yet clear what effect they will have on the policy of the Govern-

¹ This date appears to be a mistake for March 21. Cf. note 2.

² Not printed. This telegram of March 21 reported a quotation in the 'Messagero' of March 20 from the 'Sunday Times' of March 19 saying that Lord Halifax had spoken to the

ment. While some extreme Fascists are saying that it is now Italy's turn, general apprehension at German connexion had undoubtedly increased.

I do not know if the 'Sunday Times' is correctly quoted or if the line reported is general in the British press. I feel, however, that undue or unnecessary emphasis on ideological or democratic nature of opposition to Germany (particularly if U.S.S.R. is included in circle of democratic countries) cannot but induce Italy to identify herself with German action more than she has already done.

In September Signor Mussolini might have promised to support Germany particularly in the event of an ideological coalition against her on the ground that in that event Italy would be threatened to an equal extent (see e.g. paragraph 4 of my despatch No. 1107³ of last year).

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

Cabinet of possible consultations with France, America and the U.S.S.R. with a view to creating a 'united democratic front against aggression'.

³ Not printed.

No. 377

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 7.20 p.m.)

No. 200 Telegraphic [R 1884/7/22]

ROME, March 21, 1939, 6.50 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 120.¹

While German action against Czecho-Slovakia has certainly alarmed and upset public opinion here and indeed has probably shocked Mussolini (see my telegram No. 196²) it would I feel be a grave error to believe that if Mussolini gave orders for Italian people to march against France he would not command absolute obedience.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of March 20 Sir E. Phipps reported a statement by M. Bonnet that, according to his information, there had been a 'favourable change in Italian public opinion' in consequence of the German action against Czecho-Slovakia. M. Bonnet did not know whether this change extended to the Italian Government.

² No. 375.

No. 378

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)

No. 48 Telegraphic [R 1910/399/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 22, 1939, 6.10 p.m.

Unless you think that such action would be unwise please inform Prince Paul in strict confidence that we have just received from a secret source in

Italy the following report for the accuracy of which we cannot of course vouch.

2. Extremist elements in the entourage of Signor Mussolini have been talking of a possible move, to take place about April 1, to intervene in Yugoslavia to 'establish order' between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes by an overwhelming display of armed force. This move would in all probability be accompanied by a landing in Albania. A pretext for such intervention has already been arranged.

No. 379

*Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 24, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 54 Telegraphic [R 1967/399/22]

BELGRADE, March 23, 1939, 8.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 48.¹

Prince Paul, to whom I communicated substance this morning, thanks you for your kindness in notifying him. In the light of information which he gave me yesterday evening and which will reach you by Saving telegram² on Saturday morning, he is inclined to think your report, if authentic, is out of date. What he told me yesterday evening was briefly that he had just had personal message from Signor Mussolini to the effect that a strong and united Yugoslavia was more than ever an Italian interest and he begged Prince Paul to settle the Croat question immediately as he had information that Germans were working in a contrary sense. (It is true that Germans are very active in Croatia and Slovenia and that Croat extremists are in touch with Germany while Dr. Matchek³, though still loyal to Yugoslav dynasty, is making agreement impossible in spite of the best disposition here to come to reasonable terms.)

His Royal Highness who thinks Signor Mussolini was left in the dark as regards German stroke in Czecho-Slovakia and is consequently very angry (so far as I have seen there has been no congratulatory telegram this time) admits that Italians may be preparing a pretext to occupy Slovenia themselves in order to forestall German push to the Adriatic. On the whole, however, he is inclined to think that whatever may have been the Italian intention a fortnight ago, Signor Mussolini's recent treatment at the hands of Herr Hitler may have worked a considerable change in him and that his message three days ago may be sincere.

¹ No. 378.

² Not printed. In this telegram of March 22, Sir R. Campbell reported Signor Mussolini's message to Prince Paul as indicated above. Signor Mussolini also said that he had informed Herr Hitler of Italy's interest in a strong and united Yugoslavia.

³ Leader of the Croatian Peasant party.

No. 380

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 89 Saving: Telegraphic [R 1839/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 25, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Paris telegram No. 118¹ and Rome telegram No. 195.²

Please inform French Government, (making use, if you think this desirable, of Lord Perth's views as expressed in Rome telegram under reference), that in existing circumstances it will in my opinion be best, after all, to make no comment of any kind to Count Ciano on his interview with Sir Noel Charles as reported in Rome telegram No. 186.³

Repeated to Rome.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Campbell reported that he had taken action on No. 373, and that M. Bonnet saw no objection to Lord Perth speaking to Count Ciano in the sense suggested.

² No. 374.

³ No. 372.

No. 381

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 106 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2080/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 28, 1939, 5.30 p.m.*

If I am right in supposing that M. Daladier proposes tomorrow to reply to the statements in Signor Mussolini's speech¹ regarding Italy's claims against France, I think that it would be highly desirable that you should endeavour to ascertain if possible the manner in which M. Daladier is going to deal with this delicate problem. It might arouse French suspicions if we were to ask for an exchange of views on the subject, although as a matter of fact we should have good grounds for doing so by reason of the commitments we have assumed (cf. last sentence of paragraph 5 of my telegram No. 70²). But I should hope that our relations with French Ministers at the present moment were sufficiently intimate to make it possible for you to be able to broach the subject to M. Daladier in such a manner as to elucidate [*sic* ? elicit] some information as to the lines on which the French Government's mind is working. I am somewhat afraid that M. Léger may be exercising his influence to prevent any response being made to what may have been intended by Mussolini nor [*sic*] to make things more difficult.

2. Unless you see definite objection I should be glad, therefore, if you would obtain an interview at once with M. Daladier with this object. If it should appear that M. Daladier is proposing to rebuff what may be

¹ On March 26, in a speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Fascism, Signor Mussolini had said that the barricade which the Spanish civil war had constituted between France and Italy was now almost down. The Italian Note of December 17 had put forward the questions which must be settled between the two countries—Tunis, Jibuti and the Suez Canal.

² No. 351.

considered to have been a guarded attempt, even if clumsy, on the part of Mussolini to resume contact with the French Government, while at the same time saving his own face, I should hope that you might find it possible to question whether this is the correct attitude to adopt. But I leave it to you to decide how far you can go in offering any advice.

3. I realise fully the somewhat embarrassing position in which France is placed by this manoeuvre on the part of Mussolini, and I fully understand that the French Government will be averse from making any move which might suggest that they, instead of the Italian Government, were the petitioners, and that France must take the initiative in making offers to Mussolini of the basis on which negotiations might be started. All the same, I should have thought that this difficulty might be circumvented if M. Daladier were to take the following line.

4. He might, while welcoming the definition of the limitation of Italy's claims as revealed by Mussolini's speech, point out that the nature and details of these claims were still undefined, and that it was therefore impossible for the French Government to express an opinion on them. The most convenient method of elucidating these points would be for the two Governments to enter into an exchange of views through the diplomatic channel which would give the Italian Government the opportunity of stating their case. Such a reply would not commit the French Government but would make it clear that provided that he was prepared to adopt the usual diplomatic method the French Government would not refuse all discussions; and lastly, it would still leave it to Mussolini to make the first move as far as the actual opening of the negotiations was concerned.

No. 382

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 28, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 134 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2081/7/22]

PARIS, March 28, 1939

Your telegram No. 106.¹

I saw Daladier at 8 p.m. this evening.

I said that His Majesty's Government had seen in the press that he was to broadcast a speech on March 29 and they wondered whether he meant to make any reply to Mussolini.

Daladier said that that was his intention. He meant to point out [? that], contrary to many statements that had been made publicly, the French Government had not been informed in Italian Note of December 17 last or in any other official manner what was the nature of the Italian claims. He would indicate that any such claims should be made through French Ambassador in Rome or Italian Ambassador in Paris. He would add however that no inch of French territory and no vital French interest could be surrendered.

¹ No. 381.

I said that His Majesty's Government would I knew be relieved to hear that Daladier did not mean to bang a door that Mussolini, in his clumsy and ungracious way, had perhaps meant to open. Moreover it must be remembered that dictators always spoke partly to their own public and partly to the outside world.

I did not think Daladier in any way resented my remarks but I feel sure that further efforts to tone down his speech would be useless.

No. 383

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 31, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 236 *Telegraphic* [R 2174/7/22]

ROME, March 30, 1939, 10.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 235.¹

High official in the Ministry of Popular Culture (propaganda) when asked this afternoon whether he could give any official opinion regarding M. Daladier's speech² said that Italian Government regarded it with 'indifference' and added that, while he could say no more himself, Gayda's article in the 'Giornale d'Italia' this evening was worth reading.

However ungraciously expressed, this and other articles in the press seem to indicate Italian desire to keep the door open.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported Signor Gayda's unfavourable comment on M. Daladier's speech.

² M. Daladier's speech followed the lines of his remarks to Sir E. Phipps reported in No. 382. He also said that the French Government were ready to examine any proposals submitted to them by the Italian Government.

No. 384

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 3)

No. 278 [R 2245/399/22]

ROME, March 30, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a memorandum by Colonel Brocas Burrows, Military Attaché at this Embassy, regarding reports which have been received about the calling up of men to the colours.

2. There is undoubtedly considerable activity in calling up reservists but I agree with Colonel Burrows that, so far, no action has been taken by the Italian Government which could lead one to suppose that they have any immediate warlike intentions.

3. The reference to the calling up of the men of the 1912 and 1913 classes in Milan, mentioned in paragraph 4 (a) of the memorandum, is to a report from His Majesty's Consul-General at Milan to the effect that men from a

large factory belonging to the two classes were called up during last week-end. I have asked His Majesty's Consul-General there to make further enquiry in order to confirm this information and will report further to Your Lordship should I obtain more details.

4. Colonel Burrows' reference in paragraph 4 (b) is to information received from the Irish member of the International Institute of Agriculture, who learns through his messenger that the authorities are sending out mobilisation cards to individuals ordering them to report at some centre far away from their place of residence, e.g. a man in Rome might be sent to Naples. The messenger, who is stated to be a reliable man, said that a friend of his in the post office had informed him that every day the office had a pile of cards to deliver in Rome. Two employees at the International Institute, probably belonging to the 1906 class, have been called up and in the shops and markets there is a certain amount of grumbling about the calling up of relations.

I have, &c.,
For the Ambassador,
ARTHUR YENCKEN

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 384

Calling up of Reservists

Memorandum

No. 274.

ROME, March 29, 1939

H.M. Chargé d'Affaires

1. Numerous reports from various sources indicate that there is considerable activity afoot in the calling up of reservists.

2. I have no evidence that anything on the scale of a general mobilization is going on or impending and before attempting to form any conclusions the following factors must be borne in mind:—

- (a) During this week the 1918 Class joins the colours for its conscript service and those of the 1916 and 1917 Classes who are just finishing their term will be returning to civilian life. This activity is bound to cause a certain amount of disturbance especially in the present state of political tension.
- (b) The calling up of men of the 1901 and succeeding classes is still continuing.
- (c) Post military training has up till now been neglected in the Army and it may well be that steps are being taken to correct this omission by the normal recall of reservists for training.
- (d) The training season begins in April and the recall of a number of reservists for refresher training from now until after manœuvres is merely normal.
- (e) The crisis of September 1938 showed many defects in the mobilization machinery and it is possible that steps are being taken to improve it by calling up test cases.

(f) Last Sunday's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Fascism led to the calling up and despatch to Rome of numerous militia units.

3. Nevertheless there is undoubtedly a feeling of apprehension among the general public. This is confirmed by my colleagues who equally have no definite evidence.

4. Then we have the following reports:—

- (a) from H.M. Consul-General Milan about the calling up of men of the 1912-13 Classes.
- (b) from Rome post office about the daily despatch of a pile of calling up cards.
- (c) numerous reports of individuals being called up belonging to all classes up to 1908 and also 1912.

5. Although from the evidence available I do not think that anything abnormal is being carried out, and although the normal reporting for service of the annual class points to the fact that the Army is not being prepared for immediate action, I cannot exclude the possibility that a form of partial mobilization is in progress.

M. B. BURROWS
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 385

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 19 Telegraphic [R 2207/1335/90]

DURAZZO, March 31, 1939, 9.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 16.¹

There are fresh rumours of Italian pressure on Albania. Member of French Legation was told confidentially yesterday at Press Bureau that Italian Government had presented demands almost in form of an ultimatum for financial control, acceptance of Italian gendarmerie mission, increase in army, customs union, youth organization under Italian auspices and unlimited Italian immigration.

My French colleague is sceptical about this information and I agree with him; but we think it singular that Press Bureau should have conveyed it in such a manner that it could not fail to get about, although without publicity.

Other rumours are not worth reproducing but there are various signs of nervous tension in Tirana. On the other hand Minister for Foreign Affairs assured me last night that Italy had undertaken to ask for nothing which was not covered by Treaty of Alliance, that there was no Italian menace and that certain economic negotiations were in progress. While scouting any idea of Italian aggression he emphasized fact that if it did take place it would be resisted. This, as you know, is King Zog's own line but I still think that it has

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of March 25 Sir A. Ryan reported the views of his diplomatic colleagues on the reports of imminent Italian action in Albania.

reference more to what might happen in the event of major international complications than to the immediate situation between Italy and Albania.

I have just heard from a fairly good source of troop concentrations at Bari and Brindisi and of the embarkation of a considerable force at the former place. There seems to be much gossip there about Albania as being the destination. It occurs to me that if troops have been concentrated and embarked, real objective may be North Africa.

Italian Minister left for Rome yesterday, the new Albanian Minister to Italy left this morning.

Repeated to Rome, Athens, Belgrade, Sofia, Angora and Bucharest.

No. 386

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 243 Telegraphic [R 2251/7/22]

ROME, March 31, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan from Sir N. Charles.

1. As I was seeing Count Ciano this evening I asked him if he would allow me to speak to him personally and privately. I emphasized that I had no instructions but that I desired to get certain points clear in my own mind and for that reason I hoped he would treat what I had to say on a personal basis.

2. On Count Ciano saying he was quite prepared to listen I said that I had followed Signor Mussolini's last speeches with the utmost care; that in his speech on March 26,¹ while expressing in very strong terms his opinion regarding France's behaviour towards Italy, he had nevertheless seemed to take care to leave the door open for discussion. I then said that whatever Italian Government might have thought of M. Daladier's broadcast speech the French Premier had affirmed that France was prepared to listen to proposals if reasonably presented. I then went on to say that I had been particularly interested in Signor Mussolini's speech this morning² since the Duce had had time to think over what M. Daladier had said and I had noted that although couched in somewhat harsh terms Mussolini had declared that Italy could afford to wait and had implied (in my opinion) that no doors had been shut.

3. Turning to France I said that I personally felt certain that French Government would be willing to discuss any reasonable proposals put forward by Italian Government if they were couched in reasonable terms. I said that if Count Ciano would forgive me I thought that France and Italy were behaving like a couple of old gentlemen who got thoroughly on each other's nerves and neither would make the first step towards reconciliation.

¹ See No. 381, note 1.

² In a speech at Reggio Signor Mussolini had said that he had little to add to his previous speech of March 26, and had added. 'We do not forget. We make ready. We think in decades, and consequently we are always ready to wait, with the confidence of a nation which has plenty of arms and sound hearts.'

4. I thanked Count Ciano for listening thus far with so much patience and asked whether he would authorise me to inform Your Lordship that if it were found possible to arrange some form of contact between Paris and Rome which might even be of a secret and private nature, Italian Government would come forward willingly and in such a manner that there should be no fear of the situation becoming worse than before and that there might even be a possibility of some amicable agreement being discussed.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs received what I had to say in extremely good part. He said that he appreciated very much what I had said; it showed good-will on my part and added that had I spoken to him in this way a few days ago he would have given me an answer at once. Now he could not give any kind of reply as so many things had happened in the last few days during Mussolini's absence culminating in the Prime Minister's statement this afternoon.³ He would, however, discuss the matter with Mussolini. He said that he quite understood that my conversation was of an entirely personal nature.

³ i.e. the announcement of the guarantee to Poland. See No. 582.

No. 387

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 2, 2.50 p.m.)

No. 251 Telegraphic [R 2252/7/22]

ROME, April 2, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

Counsellor of French Embassy informs member of my staff that M. François-Poncet now thinks that Italian demands over Jibuti and Suez should present no difficulty and that as regards Tunis they will probably be satisfied with the making permanent of present temporary arrangement regarding status of Italian community. French Ambassador is convinced that Italian Government want to make an agreement with France quickly (this is confirmed from other sources) and he for his part is perfectly ready to go to see Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and ask him what exactly Italian desires are if only he gets instructions. Counsellor is not hopeful however of such instructions being forthcoming; for while M. Bonnet now appears to realize the situation there are formidable difficulties in French Cabinet.

French Naval Attaché independently confirmed above and stated that French Embassy realize that there is now opportunity which may not last to settle Franco-Italian differences but there are certain blind or fanatic anti-Fascists in French Cabinet such as M. Campinchi who are determined at any cost to prevent any *rapprochement* with Fascist Italy.

Please treat sources as confidential.

CHAPTER V

British proposals for the organization of mutual support against further German aggression: Memel: Anglo-French conversations of March 21-22. (March 17-23, 1939)

No. 388

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 88 Telegraphic [C 3356/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1939, 9.10 p.m.*

My telegrams to Warsaw No. 36¹ and Moscow No. 31.²

Please inform French Government, and explain to them that I am endeavouring to elicit views of these Governments in order to assist His Majesty's Government in coming to a decision as to their own attitude. Before His Majesty's Government take any decision they will wish to concert with the French Government a common line of policy.

While we do not ask the French Government to take any parallel action, we should of course be grateful for their views.

We would urge most particularly that there should be no leakage.

¹ No. 390.

² No. 389.

No. 389

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 31 Telegraphic [C 3356/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1939, 9.35 p.m.*

Roumanian Minister told me this afternoon¹ that he understood Roumanian Government had been asked by German Government to agree to give latter monopoly of Roumanian exports and to accept measures of industrial restriction inside Roumania in German interests. On this basis Germany would guarantee Roumanian frontiers.

2. Roumanian Government was disposed to regard this as in nature of ultimatum though I understand that on their refusal to accept these terms further terms have been suggested.

¹ For a fuller account of the conversation, see No. 395.

3. Roumanian Minister, emphasising extreme urgency, proceeded to ask whether His Majesty's Government would be able to give precise indication of their position in the event of Roumania becoming victim of German aggression.

4. I told Minister that I should report what he had said urgently to the Prime Minister and my colleagues, but that I anticipated an essential element in their judgment would be the knowledge of what would be the attitude of other Governments.

5. Please enquire immediately of Soviet Government whether they can give any indication that they would, if requested by Roumanian Government, actively help the latter to resist German aggression.

Repeated to Paris and Bucharest.

No. 390

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw), Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), Sir S. Waterlow (Athens), Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)

No. 36¹ Telegraphic [C 3356/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Roumanian Minister told me this afternoon² that he understood Roumanian Government had been asked by German Government to agree to give latter monopoly of Roumanian exports and to accept measures of industrial restriction inside Roumania in German interests. On this basis Germany would guarantee Roumanian frontiers.

2. Roumanian Government was disposed to regard this as in nature of ultimatum though I understand that on their refusal to accept these terms further terms have been suggested.

3. Roumanian Minister, emphasising extreme urgency, proceeded to ask whether His Majesty's Government would be able to give precise indication of their position in the event of Roumania becoming victim of German aggression. He enquired whether it would make it easier for His Majesty's Government to do this if Poland and Roumania agreed to make treaty provision between them clearly applicable as against German aggression and if Balkan Entente proclaimed their joint determination to guarantee each other's frontiers.

4. I told the Minister that I should report what he had said urgently to the Prime Minister and my colleagues but that I anticipated an essential element in their judgment would be the knowledge, if you could supply this, of what in fact would be attitude of Government to which you are accredited in circumstances foreshadowed.

5. Please endeavour to obtain immediately expression of opinion from Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Repeated to Paris and Bucharest.

¹ No. 36 to Warsaw, No. 48 to Angora, No. 49 to Athens, No. 40 to Belgrade.

² See No. 389, note 1.

No. 391

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 56 Telegraphic [C 3362/92/55]

WARSAW, March 17, 1939, 11.52 p.m.

My telegram No. 50.¹

As regards Danzig, Minister for Foreign Affairs told me he had no reason to attach any importance to these rumours and that his information as to German military movements for instance pointed to their all going South and not East. He discounted the importance of any movements of troops in East Prussia and did not in fact think that there was any danger of a German *coup* there. He added categorically that should Germany occupy Danzig, Poland would fight. General Staff have today said the same to Military Attaché.

As regards Memel he saw no immediate danger and thought perhaps in both cases rumours were due rather to local excitement than to any real evidence of German intentions.

Repeated to Danzig and Berlin.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of March 16 Sir H. Kennard reported that the Polish Government had no information 'of an alarming character' about the situation in Danzig.

No. 392

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [C 3453/19/18]

WARSAW, March 17, 1939, 11.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 51.¹

I discussed the general situation with M. Beck tonight and asked His Excellency whether the German Government had given their consent to realization of a common frontier with Hungary. M. Beck told me that the German Ambassador on his return from Berlin this week had told him that the German Government had expressed their *désintéressement* as he understood they had to the Hungarian Government.

2. As regards Slovakia the Polish Government has asked the German Government for an interpretation of the word 'Schutz'² which was a new word in diplomatic vocabulary. He did not consider that this chapter was closed and hoped that a protectorate might not be established over Slovakia to the same degree as over Bohemia and Moravia. He is at any rate leaving his diplomatic representative in Bratislava for the time being.

3. I asked M. Beck whether he really thought that a common frontier would be of any value in preventing further German penetration eastward. His Excellency said that he had never believed in the powers of resistance of Czecho-Slovakia but thought Hungary with all its failings had a more

¹ Not printed.

² i.e. 'protection'.

genuine sense of patriotism and would be prepared to fight for her independence. I suggested that Germany in her desire to obtain military supplies such as petrol from Roumania might take drastic measures in that direction and how far Polish alliance with Roumania³ would become . . .⁴ German aggression. M. Beck replied that alliance with its military conventions only envisaged Russia as aggressor.

4. His Excellency said that he was still endeavouring to bring about agreement between Hungary and Roumania as to their respective zones in Ruthenia and hoped that one would finally be reached.

Repeated to Budapest, Berlin and Bucharest.

³ The Polish-Roumanian Treaty of 1931 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 134, p. 1050.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 393

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18)

No. 134 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3423/19/18]

PARIS, March 17, 1939

1. His Majesty's Minister asked the Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning whether he had formed any opinion as to Herr Hitler's next step. M. Charvériat said he had no definite ideas, though it seemed possible that action might be taken in respect of Danzig and Memel. With regard to Danzig the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received news similar to that reported in Danzig telegram No. 23.¹ They had also had indications that there might be imminent German designs on Memel. The Lithuanian Government felt anxiety on the subject and had asked for French advice. They had been told that not having given any guarantee of Memel, France would not take any individual action in the event of a German *coup*, and that the Ministry did not know what the prospects of collective action might be.

2. M. Charvériat said he would welcome any indications of the views of His Majesty's Government and any information they might possess on this question.

3. M. Charvériat went on to say that the German Embassy had yesterday sent officials to take possession of the Czecho-Slovak Legation in Paris. The French Government had sent police to protect it. The matter had been discussed by M. Charvériat with the Counsellor of the German Embassy this morning. M. Charvériat had stated that the German Embassy had acted too precipitately since the matter was not a simple one. The French Government could not permit the transfer of the Legation to the Germans at once and without further ado: the Government of the independent State of Slovakia might claim it or even the Hungarian Government in view of the occupation of Ruthenia. M. Bräuer had said that he felt sure the matter would be easily

¹ No. 275.

arranged between his Ambassador and the late Czecho-Slovak Minister. M. Charvériat had replied that if M. Osusky agreed that was another matter, but that he was the only person who could do so.

4. M. Charvériat received the impression that certain doubts were teasing the Germans: M. Bräuer had gone out of his way to assure him that there was nothing changed between Germany and France. Herr Hitler's latest moves were only the logical completion of the Munich Agreement, which had recognised that Germany must have order in Central Europe.

5. With regard to Hungarian action in Ruthenia, M. Charvériat did not think that Poland was in league with Germany: if anything she might have some understanding with Hungary in the matter. He was inclined to agree that Germany had not now made any objection to the Hungarian move because she knew that whenever she thought the moment opportune she could undo it.

No. 394

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 252 [C 3357/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 17, 1939

Sir,

The United States Ambassador asked to see me to-day on his return from Rome. He began by asking me whether I could give him any indication, in his own words, of where we went next, in the light of recent events. American public opinion, like all other, was profoundly shocked, and it was very important that it should be protected, as far as might be, from jumping to entirely wrong conclusions. There was evidence that the real danger consisted in the fact that so many people, well-intentioned but not well-informed, subconsciously believed that there was somewhere a perfect plan which would avoid all the evils of which they complained—and which would, incidentally, not involve war—but which the European democracies were either too short-sighted or too faint-hearted to put into operation. The truth, however, as he saw it, was that nothing whatever could have prevented these recent events in Czecho-Slovakia except the decision to make war. None the less, he feared that one reaction from them might be a greater accretion of strength to the anti-British sentiment in America, which would outweigh the feeling against the Germans, as this could hardly be more hostile than it was already.

2. I told the Ambassador that, as regards practical measures, he would have seen that we had suspended the visit of the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of Overseas Trade to Berlin, and I could tell His Excellency that, after consultation with the Prime Minister to-day, I had instructed our Ambassador in Berlin to come home to report. We had been anxious not to place ourselves in the position of the American Government by withdrawal of the Ambassador—action which it was easy enough to take, but which, having [? been] taken, made it very difficult to revert to the *status quo ante*.

3. As regards questions whether of future policy or the presentation of this future policy to world opinion, I thought the speech that the Prime Minister was making this evening¹ would be generally regarded as an indication of how deeply British opinion was moved and what might be the reactions from this emotion in the field of policy. It was, as the Ambassador would recognise himself, impossible for us to accept indefinite commitments for every country in Europe, but this did not mean that a great many people were not re-examining many positions that had been taken in the past, and that this in turn might not have very considerable influence upon the country's political thought. For many years a conflict had been proceeding between two conceptions. One had been that which based itself upon the view taken by many people that the best way to avoid trouble was to rally all the forces of order and peace and announce in advance a joint decision to resist any violation of either. This conception had expressed itself in different forms; up to a point in the Covenant, more precisely, I supposed, in the Geneva Protocol, and generally in the various suggestions made from time to time for some organisation for what was loosely termed collective security. The other conception was that of seeking to avoid trouble by the avoidance of commitments, and by the attempt to keep out of any possible conflict unless the country concerned was itself the object of attack. The judgment at which anybody arrived as between these two alternatives naturally depended very greatly upon the estimate he formed upon the probabilities or otherwise of his own country being the object of direct attack. If he rated these probabilities in the case of his own country low, the inclination naturally would be to prefer that low estimate of probability of direct attack to the chance of embroilment in other people's quarrels. If, on the other hand, the chances of direct attack loomed more large, the advantages of general co-operation required to be more carefully weighed. I had little doubt that recent events would have the result of leading many people to examine afresh the latter method of seeking to gain security.

4. I told the Ambassador that I thought the Prime Minister's speech to-night would give a very clear indication both of the moral judgment passed in this country on recent events, and also make it very plain that this country was under no illusions as to the issues that they involved. I thought it would also be desirable that something should be publicly stated that would show that we clearly appreciated the new technique employed by the German Government to facilitate these *coups* by way of the artificial stimulation of disruptive movements within a State. For what it was worth, this might be expected to make rather more difficult the free employment of such methods. It ought, so it seemed to me, to be the object of our two Governments to bend all their efforts, as discreetly as they might, to the task of making it plain to the German people that we were animated by no hostile motives towards them, but that our attitude was dictated wholly by the extent to which the moral sense of civilisation was outraged by the present rulers of Germany. The Ambassador said that he thought that what I had said represented the

¹ See No. 308, note 1.

limit of possible action open to us at this moment, and agreed with me that one of the most useful contributions that the President could probably make at the present juncture was if he was able to secure the taking of some action quickly in regard to the United States Neutrality Act. Mr. Kennedy rang me up later in the afternoon to say that he had just had news that action in this sense had been taken by way of a message from the President to Congress.²

5. The Ambassador added that he greatly hoped that His Majesty's Government would not allow any of the Czech money deposited in English banks to pass out of this country into the hands of Germany. He thought he could assure me that no such money would be permitted to leave the United States. (He has since sent a message to say that Mr. Morgenthau had last night informed him that he had arranged with all New York banks not to honour any cheques on the Czech account from the day on which the Germans entered Czecho-Slovakia.)

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² Mr. Roosevelt said at a press conference on March 17 that recent European developments gave emphasis to the need for some revision of the neutrality laws, and that conferences would be held to draw up a programme for some such revision.

No. 395

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 99 [C 3356/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 17, 1939*

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister asked to see me urgently this afternoon and began by repeating to me what he had previously said to Sir Orme Sargent,¹ to the effect that by the recent German action in Czecho-Slovakia the Roumanian Government had lost a large stock of armaments on which they had been counting, and accordingly had immediately had to take steps by which this might be replaced. He accordingly wished to make a request to His Majesty's Government for a loan of £10 million, by which the Roumanian Government might re-equip their military forces and develop their air force. In the view of the Minister it was by no means to be excluded that the German Government would make an almost immediate thrust upon Roumania. There were in Czecho-Slovakia a larger number of divisions than the position in Czecho-Slovakia could itself require, and the temptation to exploit the position might accordingly be very strong.

2. He reinforced this general appreciation by saying that during the last few days the Roumanian Government had received a request from the German Government to grant them a monopoly of Roumanian exports, and

¹ See No. 298.

to adopt certain measures of restriction of Roumanian industrial production in German interests. If these conditions were accepted, Germany would guarantee the Roumanian frontiers.

3. This seemed to the Roumanian Government something very much like an ultimatum. I understand that at a later interview M. Tilea told Sir Alexander Cadogan that his Government had refused these proposals and that further proposals had subsequently been received from the German Government, but that of these he had not particulars.

4. The Minister said that in view of his Government it was of the utmost importance that His Majesty's Government should consider with all urgency whether they could give a precise indication of the action they would take in the event of Roumania being a victim of German aggression. If it was possible to construct a solid block of Poland, Roumania, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia with the support of Great Britain and France, it was to be expected that the situation might be saved. During the last two or three days there had been remarkable developments of Roumanian unity in face of what seemed imminent danger, and the Minister could not impress upon me too strongly the gravity with which his Government viewed the present position. He left with me a telegram instructing him 'to draw the attention of the British Government to the huge consequences not only for Central Europe but also for the entire European continent which the ever-growing belief that there is only one arbiter in Europe who decides over the safety, peace and independence of nations may have. Nevertheless, no statement and no action coming from the Western Powers was dispelling this belief.' I told the Roumanian Minister that the Prime Minister was making a speech to-night² which would, though not in the precise form that he had asked, convey a very unmistakable warning to all concerned.

5. The Minister finally asked me whether it would make it easier for His Majesty's Government to join in the drawing of such a line, if it were possible for the Roumanian Government to reach agreement with the Polish Government as to the applicability of their joint treaty provisions as against the case of German aggression, and, in the second place, if the Powers of the Balkan Entente were prepared to proclaim their willingness to guarantee each other's frontiers. This he thought they would be willing to do, and if it were done it would evidently be a contribution to the situation of first-rate importance.

6. I told M. Tilea that I could obviously give him no immediate answer to his question. I would, however, undertake to lay it with all urgency before the Prime Minister and my colleagues in the Government. The Minister said he could not ask for more, but again emphasised that, in the view of his Government, these matters might possibly be a question of days.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² See No. 308, note 1.

M. de Charbonnière¹ to Sir O. Sargent

[C 3369/19/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE À LONDRES, *vendredi soir* [March 17, 1939]

Cher Sir Orme

L'Ambassadeur me charge de vous faire parvenir ci-joint le texte exact de la note que l'Ambassadeur de France à Berlin a été chargé de remettre à la Wilhelmstrasse et dont M. Corbin vous avait déjà communiqué la substance cet après-midi.²

Veuillez croire, &c.

CHARBONNIÈRE

¹ M. de Charbonnière was 2nd Secretary in the French Embassy in London.

² The reference is evidently to the interview reported in No. 412. See also No. 412, note 1.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 396¹

Par lettre en date du 15 mars 1939, Son Exc. M. l'Ambassadeur d'Allemagne a communiqué d'ordre de son Gouvernement à M. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la République le texte d'un accord conclu dans la nuit du 14 au 15 entre le Führer-Chancelier et le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères du Reich d'une part et le Président et le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la République tchécoslovaque d'autre part.

Il était précisé dans la même communication que des troupes allemandes avaient franchi à six heures du matin la frontière tchèque et que les mesures nécessaires étaient prises pour prévenir toute résistance et toute effusion de sang, et pour permettre que l'occupation et la pacification du territoire s'effectuassent avec ordre et tranquillité. L'Ambassadeur de France a l'honneur de saisir le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères du Reich de la protestation formelle élevée par le Gouvernement de la République contre les mesures dont la communication du Comte Welzeck fait état.

Le Gouvernement de la République considère en effet qu'il se trouve placé du fait de l'action dirigée par le Gouvernement du Reich contre la Tchécoslovaquie en face d'une violation flagrante de la lettre et de l'esprit des accords signés à Munich le 29 septembre 1938.

Les circonstances dans lesquelles l'accord du 15 mars a été imposé aux dirigeants de la République tchécoslovaque ne sauraient consacrer en droit, aux yeux du Gouvernement de la République, l'état de fait enregistré par cet accord.

L'Ambassadeur de France a l'honneur de faire savoir à M. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères du Reich que le Gouvernement de la République ne peut reconnaître dans ces conditions² la situation nouvelle créée en Tchécoslovaquie par l'action du Reich et qu'il formule toutes réserves sur les conséquences de tout ordre qui pourraient en être tirées.

¹ The text of this Note is printed in the French Yellow Book, op. cit., No. 76.

² In a communication of March 22 from the French Embassy enclosing a final version of the above note the words 'la légitimité de' occur at this point.

No. 397

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 12.30 p.m.)

No. 44 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3401/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 18, 1939

Please cancel your telegram No. 36 to Warsaw¹ and telegram No. 31 to Moscow.²

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Belgrade, Paris, Warsaw and Moscow.

¹ No. 390.

² No. 389.

No. 398

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 1.45 p.m.)

No. 4 Telegraphic [N 1462/30/59]

RIGA, March 18, 1939, 2.18 p.m.

Lithuanian Military Attaché here . . .¹ informed from Kovno that arms are being brought into Memel from Germany and that Germans are being sent to East Prussia by sea. A German *coup* is expected any day. Military Attaché is positive that no military resistance would be offered unless the limits of the Memel district were passed.

Repeated to Kovno.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

No. 399

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 3.40 p.m.)

No. 45 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3402/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 18, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

It appeared to me so utterly improbable that the Minister for Foreign Affairs would not have informed me that an *immediate* threatening situation had developed here that I called on him as soon as your telegrams to Warsaw and Moscow had been decyphered. He told me that he was being inundated with enquiries regarding report of German ultimatum which had appeared in 'The Times' and 'Daily Telegraph' today. There was not a word of truth in it.

I asked how negotiations with Dr. Wohltat² were progressing and told him the gist of what the Roumanian Minister had said to Your Lordship yesterday. Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed bewilderment and maintained under close cross-examination that economic negotiations with the Germans

¹ No. 397.

² Dr. Wohltat was Ministerial Director for special duties in the Reich Ministry of Economics.

were proceeding on completely normal lines as between equals. He assured me most positively that there had been no attempt hitherto to introduce politics into the discussions and that the tone of the German negotiations was more conciliatory since the Czech *coup* than before. Minister for Foreign Affairs was in fact absolutely positive that *for the moment* there was no threat to Roumania's political or economic independence.

Minister for Foreign Affairs is distressed that the Roumanian Minister should in an excess of zeal have misrepresented the situation and will endeavour to ensure that this shall not recur. He implied that he would be very grateful if you did not withdraw your entire confidence from Roumanian Minister. With the greatest diffidence as I realize the enormity of his blunder I venture to endorse Minister for Foreign Affairs' views.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Angora, Belgrade and Athens.

No. 400

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 58 Telegraphic [C 3454/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 18, 1939, 4.20 p.m.

I communicated the relevant portion of your telegram No. 36¹ to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning. He told me he could not understand the communication of the Roumanian Minister as the Polish Minister at Bucharest had discussed the general situation fully with the King of Roumania yesterday evening and His Majesty made no mention of any such action on the part of the German Government. The Roumanian Minister in London had given similar information to the Polish Ambassador and M. Beck was making enquiries in Bucharest and promised to inform me of their result. He personally could hardly believe that the statements of the Roumanian Minister in London were well-founded.

2. I said that it seemed impossible that the Roumanian Minister had approached you without full authority from his Government though it appears true that (on enquiries being made at the Roumanian Embassy here) Roumanian Ambassador here telephoned to Bucharest this morning and was told by his Government that this was merely a newspaper invention and that he could issue a *démenti*.

3. M. Beck further told me very confidentially that he had quite recently received assurances in Berlin that the Reich regarded Hungary's claim on Roumania as unjustifiable and that they would give them no encouragement. M. Beck was on his side doing all that he could to prevent a serious divergence of view arising between the Hungarian and Roumanian Governments as regards the Ruthenian question and he could not believe, although everything was possible in these days, that the German Government would at this moment present what amounted to an ultimatum to the Roumanian Government.

¹ No. 390.

4. When I questioned him closely as to what the attitude of the Polish Government would be in the event of the Roumanian Minister's information proving correct and the Roumanian Government approaching the Polish Government he said that he would have to go into the matter fully with the Roumanian Government and with his own Government before giving any definite expression of view. I reminded him that he had told me yesterday evening² that the alliance with Roumania only contemplated Russia as a possible aggressor. M. Beck said again that this was so but that of course the Polish Government would be vitally interested in any threat to Roumanian independence. He would give the matter his reflection but he could not go further into it or define the final position which Poland would take up until he received confirmation from Bucharest that the report was accurate.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

² See No. 392.

No. 401

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 140 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3395/19/18]

Your telegram No. 68.¹

BERLIN, March 18, 1939

I have carried out instructions in the form of signed Note² addressed this afternoon to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and communicated through the State Secretary.

In the absence of Herr von Ribbentrop the French Ambassador handed parallel communication to State Minister [*sic*]³ at midday.

The State Secretary undoubtedly on instructions at first demurred to accepting the Note at all but in . . .⁴ accepted it as having been sent to him through the ordinary channels.

State Secretary concerned was obviously apprehensive as to what Herr Hitler's reactions would be. He begged me by telephone to endeavour to persuade His Majesty's Government to reconsider this written protest but I told him that the actions of his Government had rendered it inevitable.

¹ No. 308.

² The terms of this Note followed textually the instructions sent to Sir N. Henderson.

³ This is presumably an error for 'State Secretary'.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 402

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 112 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3378/90/17]

PARIS, March 18, 1939

Your telegram No. 88.¹

Minister handed to Secretary-General an *aide-mémoire* in accordance with your instructions and asked that Minister for Foreign Affairs should receive

¹ No. 388.

me after the sitting in the Chamber of Deputies is over. I am to see His Excellency at 8 p.m.

Meanwhile, I thought it advisable to hand M. Daladier a copy at 3 p.m.

M. Daladier said that M. Beck had today asked the French Government whether the latter would help Poland if Germans attack Danzig.

French Government have replied that French Government would do so, but only on condition that Poland concluded a defensive alliance with Roumania. They await Polish reply. If it is in the affirmative M. Daladier said that he would even send troops.

M. Daladier said that he thinks that we should do all we can to encourage Poland and the Balkan Entente to guarantee each other . . .² frontiers and to let them know that we shall support them.

I hope to get final reply this evening.

Repeated to Warsaw, Moscow and Bucharest.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 403

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 6.10 p.m.)

No. 35 Telegraphic [C 3430/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 18, 1939, 6.29 p.m.

[? Your telegram No. 31¹].²

I have just seen M. Litvinov who promised to give a reply later.

Meanwhile he put to me questions which he said his colleagues would certainly ask. Had I any indication of the line which His Majesty's Government were proposing to take themselves? Did we wish the U.S.S.R. to take engagement while leaving our own hands free? I said in a problem affecting this part of Europe His Majesty's Government quite properly wanted to know the attitude of countries principally concerned: that would be the obvious basis of our decision later.

He said at least I could tell him what was official reaction of His Majesty's Government to seizure of Czecho-Slovakia. What reply were we making to Notes which we like the Soviet Government had doubtless received from the German Government announcing the *fait accompli*? I said I could for the moment only point to the Prime Minister's speech as showing our attitude. But this did not seem to satisfy him, possibly on the same grounds that the local press pretend that the changed attitude to Germany of 'The Times' may be only for temporary and internal consumption.

His most awkward question to which I had no answer was why had not the Roumanian Government approached the Soviet Government direct?

But he was careful to say that his questions were purely for purposes of information and did not prejudice the question in any way.

Repeated to Paris and Bucharest.

¹ No. 389.

² These words appear to have been accidentally omitted.

No. 404

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 113 Telegraphic [C 3415/19/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1939, 6.30 p.m.

General Gamelin tells me that his impression is (he admits it is only an impression) that Herr Hitler's next victim in Central Europe will be Hungary and after that Roumania. He thinks events will move quickly.

No. 405

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 114 Telegraphic [C 3455/3356/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1939, 6.30 p.m.

In speaking with His Majesty's Minister this morning of the situation arising out of German demands on Roumania, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed doubts about the probable attitude of Poland. He strongly suspected that M. Beck had betrayed Roumania or was in the process of doing so, with the idea of deflecting Germany to the South East. M. Beck was entirely cynical and false. M. Léger wondered whether His Majesty's Government knew what was the real object of M. Beck's journey to London. He knew from a source very secret but absolutely sure and highly authoritative that the plan of the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs was to ask His Majesty's Government to make an alliance with Poland, so that there should be a triple Anglo-Franco-Polish alliance under which Great Britain should undertake to come to Poland's help if attacked. He knew that His Majesty's Government could not undertake a definite commitment of the sort any more than they had been able to make a definite alliance with France. He would then return to Poland and report his request and its rejection by His Majesty's Government, say there had been two alternatives for Poland, viz. to lean on Great Britain or Germany, and that now it was clear that she must lean on Germany. When asked what M. Beck hoped to gain by this M. Léger said that his was a hand-to-mouth policy and that in his country's and his own interest he only wanted to get off the difficulties of the moment even at the cost of being the vassal (perhaps the chief vassal) of the new Napoleon. He possibly hoped that things might turn out all right in the end: but his chief concern was, probably cynically, with the immediate present.

No. 406

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 18, 7.10 p.m.)

No. 67 Telegraphic [C 3406/3356/18]

ATHENS, March 18, 1939, 6.54 p.m.

Your telegram No. 49.¹

In the absence of the Prime Minister whom I shall see tonight, I gave the substance to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs this morning. He will report to the Prime Minister in the course of the day.

Speaking personally the Under-Secretary of State made the following points. (1) Greek Government would not be able to express an opinion without consulting their allies. This would be done at once. Weak point was Yugoslavia who was 'in the lion's mouth'. (2) Greek obligations under the Balkan Pact² only begin in the case of aggression by Bulgaria. But he appreciated that wider issues were at stake.

Subject to what the Prime Minister may say to me tonight my impression is that it would be dangerous to make the decision of His Majesty's Government dependent on the Balkan partners declaring their determination to guarantee their frontiers. In the absence of a lead from us such a declaration will be difficult to obtain. But if His Majesty's Government and the French Government make it clear that in any case they do not intend to remain passive if Roumania becomes the victim of German aggression, Greek and Turkish support will be necessarily assumed and it will be difficult for Yugoslavia to disassociate herself from her allies.

Repeated to Angora, Belgrade, Bucharest and Warsaw.

¹ No. 390.

² The Agreements constituting the Balkan Entente are printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 137, pp. 496-502.

No. 407

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 71 Telegraphic [C 3429/3356/18]

ANGORA, March 18, 1939, 7.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 48.¹

I read your telegram to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon. He took notes and said that he would at once consult his colleague[s] and hoped to give me an answer this evening.

He stated that it would be much easier for the Turkish Government to reach a decision if they knew what attitude His Majesty's Government would adopt. I replied that it would be very serious if each Government concerned

¹ No. 390.

waited for answer from the other and that it would be difficult for His Majesty's Government to make decision without having the answer for the questions put in your telegram.

Pending his definite answer the following may be of use as a guide.

Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he had already received somewhat similar information from Bucharest, though it had not been established whether it was quite as urgent as is represented in your telegram. He also stated that the Bulgarian President of the Council, who is here, is apprehensive of a German attack on Roumania and had enquired what would be the attitude of the Balkan Entente in such a case. He had received the reply that the Balkan Entente would fulfil its mutual obligations.

Repeated to Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade and Paris.

No. 408

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 19, 9.25 a.m.)

No. 115 Telegraphic [C 3476/3356/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1939, 9.48 p.m.

My telegram No. 112.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has heard from Roumanian Ambassador that first German demand on Roumania was made some weeks ago and is out of date. Roumanian Government are now considering a much more reasonable suggestion by Germany.

M. Tataresco however thought that it would be vital for Roumania to know whether she could count on French and British support in the event of German aggression. In this connexion he felt it would be useful to know what course Hungary and Poland would adopt.

M. Bonnet will give His Majesty's Minister written French reply to our *aide-mémoire* after French Cabinet meeting on March 19.

His Excellency feels that it is essential, before we promise help to Roumania, to know exactly what resistance the other Powers concerned will make to German aggression.

Repeated to Warsaw, Moscow and Bucharest.

¹ No. 402.

No. 409

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 40 Telegraphic [C 3356/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 18, 1939, 10.25 p.m.

My telegram to Warsaw No. 36.¹

The Roumanian Minister began this interview² by stating that as a result of recent German action in Czecho-Slovakia the Roumanian Government had lost a large stock of armaments on which they had been counting. Thus

¹ No. 390.

² See also No. 395.

they had recently concluded a contract with the Czecho-Slovak Government under which they were to take over lock, stock and barrel the whole equipment of four divisions. Some of this material might have been delivered, but the greater part was still in Czecho-Slovakia. Furthermore, the Roumanian Government had large outstanding contracts with Skoda and other factories and naturally those contracts would now be cancelled.

It was vital, therefore, for the Roumanian Government to obtain without loss of time armaments to replace those they were counting on from Czecho-Slovakia. He accordingly wished to ask whether His Majesty's Government would be prepared to grant Roumania a loan of £10,000,000 to enable the Roumanian Government to re-equip their military forces and develop their air force. In the view of the Minister it was not to be excluded that the German Government would make an almost immediate thrust upon Roumania. There were in Czecho-Slovakia a larger number of divisions than the position in Czecho-Slovakia itself would require, and the temptation to exploit the position might accordingly be very strong.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade and Angora.

No. 410

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 19)

No. 139 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3438/19/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1939

It is announced that M. Bonnet has instructed the French Ambassador at Berlin to make a protest to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs against the situation created in Czecho-Slovakia in violation of the Munich Agreements, a situation whose legality the French Government does not recognise. It is added that the British Ambassador in Berlin has been instructed by His Majesty's Government to make a similar protest.

It is also announced that M. Coulondre will be in Paris on Monday morning, having been summoned to give an account of the situation to M. Bonnet. Copy sent to Berlin.

No. 411

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20)

No. 141 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3489/19/18]

PARIS, March 18, 1939

My telegram No. 139 Saving.¹

I asked M. Bonnet how long he contemplated keeping M. Coulondre in France. His present idea is for about a week or ten days.

I feel sure, however, that he will be ready to adopt the same course as His Majesty's Government do in regard to the return or otherwise of Sir Nevile Henderson.

¹ No. 410.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 643 [C 3318/19/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on March 16 to say that he had received a message from his Government to the effect that in their view the events which had just taken place in Czecho-Slovakia constituted an armed violation of the Munich Agreement. The French Government felt that there should be no delay in making clear to the German Government that that is the view of the French Government. They wished to emphasise that by accepting what had happened without protest we should expose ourselves to an imputation of bad faith: the justification of what was agreed at Munich was that it was done for the preservation of Czecho-Slovakia under an international guarantee. If we allowed that basis of our action to be compromised, we could not, without incurring the accusation of complicity, simply look on at the dismemberment of the Czecho-Slovak State. The submission of the Czecho-Slovak Government, which in fact had been brutally imposed upon them, could not be invoked as a reason for the French and British Governments to regard themselves as freed from their moral obligation towards that State.

2. The French Government felt that it was for them a duty to make a formal protest against Germany's forcible gesture, which had destroyed the first attempt at agreement between the four Munich Powers.

3. M. Corbin said that his Government would be glad to know whether His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would join in making a similar declaration to the German Government. His Excellency left no text with Sir Alexander Cadogan and merely read out from notes and the latter took a few notes of what was read to him. The above, therefore, may not be entirely complete, and it did not appear that M. Corbin himself had any definite text of what the French Government would propose to say, but only an outline.¹

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ Sir A. Cadogan noted on March 17 on his record of this conversation that 'the Ambassador rang up subsequently to say that the French Government were anyhow resolved to make such a protest, whether we acted similarly or not. They would add that they refused to recognise these recent acts.'

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 650 [N 1477/30/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 18, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me to-day, and began by an enquiry as to whether I had anything to say to him in regard to the situation at Memel. I told him that we had received yesterday a communication from the Lithuanian Minister on the subject,¹ to which I thought I was right in saying that we had made a reply on the following lines: It was not possible for us to predict what action we might take in hypothetical circumstances that might arise in Memel, but the Lithuanian Government could be assured that, as signatories of the Memel Convention, we were not likely to raise objection to what they might think it necessary or advisable for them to do in any unforeseen developments.

2. As regards repeating the expression of warning that we had delivered in Berlin at the end of last year,² I was myself disposed to doubt whether any very useful purpose would be served by doing this, especially at a moment when much graver matters were at issue. M. Corbin said that he anticipated this would be our position and, as he was speaking without the instructions of his Government, he had no observations to make as to the French attitude. He gave me, however, to understand that it would not differ from our own. I promised to let the French Government know if we did decide to do anything in the way of making a further protest.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ The Lithuanian Minister called on Mr. Collier, head of the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, on March 16 and left an *aide-mémoire* to the effect that the Lithuanian Government considered there was 'an imminent possibility of danger to the existing *status quo* in Memel' and asking what the attitude of His Majesty's Government would be if such an emergency arose. Mr. Collier told M. Balutis that if time permitted an appeal ought to be made to the Powers which were Signatories to the Memel Convention. If on the other hand the Lithuanian Government were faced with the necessity for an immediate decision, it was unlikely that His Majesty's Government would blame them for ignoring the Statute, though as signatories of the Convention they could not advise the Lithuanian Government to ignore it.

² See Appendix VII.

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 651 [C 3449/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 18, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador to-day, His Excellency referred to a request that I understood had either been made,

or he expected to be made, for the handing over of the Czech Legation in Paris to the authorities of the German Embassy. The French Government were saying, or proposed to say, that this was a matter that required legal examination, inasmuch as the Legation represented all the component parts of what was Czecho-Slovakia, and that, while the Germans had occupied Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia and Ruthenia appeared to stand on a different basis. At the present moment, accordingly, the Legation was not being handed over and was being afforded police protection.

2. The next matter referred to was the withdrawal of our Ambassador, in regard to which M. Corbin enquired whether, before leaving, the Ambassador would have made our official *démarche* to the German Foreign Office. I said that I had no doubt he would have done so. The French protest, so M. Corbin told me, was longer than our draft, but the idea was substantially the same.

3. The Ambassador then told me that, according to his information, the Italian Government had at first been in disagreement with the German action in Czecho-Slovakia. This disagreement had, however, been adjusted by the German Government having expressed willingness to allow a common frontier between Hungary and Poland to be established. This development suggested to the Ambassador the possibility of the next point of attack being Croatia.

4. M. Corbin volunteered the information that he had thought the Prime Minister's speech¹ very good and what had been immediately required. It seemed to him faithfully to represent the reactions in this country to Czecho-Slovak events. British opinion, he said, was not in the habit of moving quickly, but, when it did move, it moved with decision.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See No. 308, note 1.

No. 415

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 652 [C 3450/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador to-day, His Excellency referred to the question of Roumania. He had seen the Roumanian Minister, who had conveyed to him the same information that he had to us.¹ I told M. Corbin in general terms the action that we were disposed to take by way of enquiry at the several capitals concerned.²

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See No. 395.

² See Nos. 389-90.

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 254 [C 3446/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1939*

Sir,

I asked the United States Ambassador to call and see me this morning in order that I might give him the information that had been conveyed to me last night by the Roumanian Minister.¹ The latter had, however, seen Mr. Kennedy himself, so that, as regards the actual information, Mr. Kennedy was already informed. I told him of the general approach that we were making by way of enquiry at Warsaw, Belgrade, Angora, Athens, Paris and Moscow,² in regard to what action might be expected from those countries in the event of German aggression on Roumania. Without that knowledge it was obviously impossible for His Majesty's Government to have the material for any sure decisions as to their own policy.

2. The Ambassador went on to say that he thought the Prime Minister's speech last night³ was first-rate, but that to him it did definitely carry a corroboration that we should resist further German aggression.

3. In a short reference to opinion in the United States, the Ambassador said that he thought the general public opinion was moving faster than he should have expected in the direction in which it was being led by the President, and that he, the Ambassador, had found American public opinion on the whole in advance of his own position. He thought that, if there were German aggression on Roumania, the United States would be more readily moved to support action that we might take in that case than if, having done nothing as regards Roumania, we then became involved in some trouble consequent upon aggression upon Greece or Turkey, when American opinion would be disposed to say that we were only acting in our own interests.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ See No. 395.² See Nos. 388-90.³ See No. 308, note 1.*Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)*

No. 513 [C 3447/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 18, 1939*

Sir,

The German Ambassador asked to see me again this afternoon. He told me that he had received instructions from the German Government to ask whether His Majesty's Government could give them any further explanation of the reasons that had led to the recall of the British Ambassador in Berlin

to report.¹ Dr. von Dirksen said that I should recollect that a short time ago the United States Government had recalled their Ambassador from his post,² to which he had not yet returned. He asked whether it was possible for me to say anything further in regard to the intentions of His Majesty's Government in this matter.

2. I told the Ambassador in reply that I was afraid there was little I could add to the public announcement that had been made. It was quite true that we had decided to recall Sir Nevile Henderson in order that he might report to us on recent events. It was quite impossible for me at this moment to say how long we should wish to keep him in this country as that decision would, no doubt, depend upon what judgment His Majesty's Government might form after hearing and considering the report that he would tender. Since we gave the Ambassador his instructions to return, he had lodged a formal protest with the German Government, who accordingly by now would be in a position to have official knowledge of the grounds on which we felt obliged to protest against what they had done in Czecho-Slovakia. There was, if I remembered rightly, some difference of form between the action which we had taken and the analogous action recently taken by the United States Government to which Dr. von Dirksen had referred. In the latter case I thought the action of the United States Government had not been subject to the expression of the purpose of furnishing a report, which was the ground we had attached to our announcement in this case. In giving this form to our instructions we had had in mind the desirability of leaving it open to His Majesty's Government, so far as they were concerned, to decide freely upon the date when they would instruct their Ambassador to return.

3. The Ambassador thanked me for what I had said and added that he hoped that the difficulties with which we were faced would soon be overcome.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ See No. 308, note 1. Sir N. Henderson returned to Berlin on April 24. Dr. von Dirksen was recalled to Berlin on March 19.

² On November 15, 1938. See Volume III of this Series, No. 310.

No. 418

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 3962/3356/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, *March 18, 1939*

In my telegram No. 114¹ of to-day I reported the substance of Léger's remarks to Campbell to-day about Poland. I send you, herewith, a memorandum by Campbell giving other points which Léger made.

ERIC PHIPPS

¹ No. 405.

Record of conversation between M. Léger and Mr. Campbell on March 18

M. Léger said that France and Great Britain were at the turning of the road. He hoped that His Majesty's Government did not mean to subordinate their attitude to the views expressed by the Governments they were now consulting as a result of the enquiry from the Roumanian Government. That would be to put the cart before the horse. These Governments would decide their attitude in accordance with the intentions of France and Great Britain. In any case they were only what he called 'corollaries'.

The essential thing, M. Léger said, was to know the attitude of Poland and Russia. His remarks as to Poland are reported in Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 114 of March 18. As regards Russia, M. Léger thought she would ask, as she had in September, what France was going to do. But she would express her readiness to help in all spheres if France intended to act, and if Roumania, should matters come to that, agreed to the passage of Russian troops across her territory. He did not think that Germany would go for Danzig and Memel for the moment as she would wish to 'ménager' Poland. Their return to Germany was a foregone conclusion, and there was no reason for France and Great Britain to take action to prevent it. But as it would be so easy for Germany to take them any time she wished, she would probably prefer not to annoy Poland for the moment, but rather, with an unirritated Poland, to turn to Roumania and deal with her.

M. Léger had a long telephone conversation with M. Daladier in Mr. Campbell's presence, in the course of which he discussed the recall from Berlin of M. Coulondre for consultation. M. Bonnet and other members of the Cabinet were evidently against it, fearing it comported a rupture of relations. M. Léger explained that it did not, but that it was a quite natural procedure, and he strongly advocated it, as it would give the German people a visible sign of the seriousness of the situation. It was only a visible sign of this sort that could do so, owing to the censorship. German action to prevent the reception of the British broadcasts showed the Government's fear of the effect on the people of facts.

M. Léger made a complaint to M. Daladier evidently against what he thought the weak attitude and hesitancy of M. Bonnet, and against his being himself 'surrounded with reticence'.

Letter from Mr. Walters (League of Nations)¹ to Mr. Randall²

[C 3580/92/55]

LEAGUE OF NATIONS, March 18, 1939

My dear Randall,

Burckhardt arrived here this afternoon. The chief of what he has to say is this. On Monday last³ in Berlin he had a private talk with Weizsäcker who told him that he was very anxious because things were going to happen which might lead to putting B. himself, and the League, into a very difficult position. Danzig and Memel were both threatened, as a result of what was about to happen. He much wished therefore that B. were not going to be in Danzig.

B. reached Danzig on Tuesday morning but did not see Greiser till Wednesday. (Forster he never saw as he has just gone into a clinic to be operated on). Greiser told him that he had seen the Führer, who had told him all that was going to happen in Czecho-Slovakia, and when asked what was to be done in Danzig, replied 'If the Poles behave nicely, we will put off a little dealing with Danzig and Memel: if not, they will learn who is the master.'

On Thursday Greiser gave B. to understand that there was a 'légère détente'. In order to confirm this, B. got the German Consul to telephone to W. in Berlin and put the question 'Are the circumstances now the same as when you spoke to me three days ago?'. The answer was 'The situation is *even more grave* now than it was and my anxieties are still stronger'. This message decided B. to come here without delay in order, as he says, 'to receive instructions as to whether he is to stay in Danzig or not'.

This is the background of the message from Avenol which I telephoned⁴ to Makins this afternoon, asking whether it would be possible for you to come out here and see him and B. (I am not sure that Arnal⁵ may not have made some such suggestion to Avenol). There are many elements that we can hardly judge, in fact we can hardly tell whether this matter is of minor or major importance as things now stand. Is it likely that there will be a German *coup* in Danzig? If so, will the Poles resist by force? If this were to happen war would be inevitable. Would it, in that case, be important that the High Commissioner of the League should be at his post, seeing that in theory he is the person who must decide in the first place whether Poland

¹ Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

² Adviser on League of Nations affairs in the Foreign Office.

³ i.e. March 13.

⁴ M. Avenol was Secretary-General of the League of Nations. The message was that M. Burckhardt was bringing 'extremely grave news'. Mr. Makins' reply to Mr. Walters' suggestion was that it was most unlikely that any member of the Foreign Office would be able to go to Geneva to see M. Burckhardt, and that the most recent information about developments in Danzig was 'somewhat more reassuring'.

⁵ M. Arnal was a member of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

should be called in in the name of the Council to defend the integrity of Danzig? Is this why the Wilhelmstrasse, after being so anxious to get him back, is now equally anxious to get him out again? These are just some of the questions that occur to me.

Of course, if Germany and Poland can now make a fresh and effective agreement about the status of Danzig, there would be no great need for anxiety on this specific point. But B. is not quite confident that such an agreement would be honoured even by the Poles, since the Polish Army is a good deal more uncompromising than the M.F.A.

I will telephone you on Monday by which time I hope you will have had this letter.

FRANK WALTERS

No. 420

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 48 Telegraphic [C 3452/3356/18]

BELGRADE, March 19, 1939, 12.40 a.m.

Your telegram No. 40.¹

It was not till I had returned from audience with the Prince Regent to carry out your instructions that I received Bucharest telegram No. 44.²

His Royal Highness whom I found greatly worried by recent events seemed overwhelmed by my question when I put it to him. He said 'You ask me what I am prepared to do but I should like to know what you are prepared to do'. I said that that was a fair question but I would ask him to put himself for a moment in Your Lordship's position. You had to put the Roumanian Government's enquiry before your colleagues and the first question you would be asked was: Where did Roumania's allies stand? After some further conversation during which I impressed [?] on] His Royal Highness that even if German action proved to be the end of an operation rather than the beginning of a new one the day might rapidly be approaching when Germany's smaller neighbours would have to decide whether they would become her vassals or defend their independence, he said, as I had anticipated, that he could not possibly answer any question until he had consulted his Cabinet, his military advisers and his allies. What he could not understand was that the Roumanian Government should have taken such a step in London without saying a word to Belgrade.

Soon after I had returned to the Legation His Royal Highness telephoned to say that he had just got into touch with the Minister for Foreign Affairs who would be able to give me information showing either that there was some misunderstanding in [*sic* ? or] that the Roumanian Minister in London had exaggerated the situation. I accordingly went, as I had intended to do

¹ No. 390.

² No. 397.

originally, to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs who read me recent telegram from Yugoslavian Ambassador in Bucharest reporting that Roumanians were being pressed hard by the Germans on economic questions but hoped to be able to settle on reasonable terms. No word of an ultimatum or of Roumanians being in a desperate situation.

See my immediately following telegram.³

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

³ No. 426.

No. 421

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 36 Telegraphic [C 3431/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 19, 1939, 12.50 a.m.

My telegram No. 35.¹

Bucharest telegram No. 44² reached me four hours after I had seen M. Litvinov.

2. On seeing him again at 10 p.m. I said that some misunderstanding seemed to have arisen as His Majesty's Minister, Bucharest, had asked that action on Roumanian Minister's *démarche* in London was [*sic* ? should be] suspended but that pending instructions from Your Lordship I did not know whether the matter had merely lost urgency or had perhaps been exaggerated. M. Litvinov said that the Soviet Ambassador in London had meanwhile telegraphed repeating news of ultimatum, which he had received from the Roumanian Minister and he (M. Litvinov) wondered whether Sir R. Hoare's telegram meant that the Roumanian Government had acquiesced in German demands.

3. He said he had immediately laid my earlier request before his Government. Latter took the view that no good purpose would be served by various Governments enquiring of each other in turn what action others would take before making up their own minds. Soviet Government therefore proposed that delegates appointed by British, Soviet, French, Polish and Roumanian Governments should meet to discuss possibilities of common action. He himself thought that Bucharest would be most suitable *venue*. I promised to transmit this suggestion to His Majesty's Government in case events should require further consultations.

4. He said that the Soviet Government had replied to the German Ambassador's Notes with a refusal to recognise seizure of Czecho-Slovakia on the ground that no Head of State had legal or constitutional right to sign away his country's independence.³

Repeated to Paris and Bucharest.

¹ No. 403.

² No. 397.

³ See No. 475.

No. 422

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), Sir S. Waterlow (Athens), Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade), and Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 50¹ Telegraphic [C 3401/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1939, 1.0 a.m.*

If you have not already acted on my telegram No. 48 (49) (40) (36)² you should suspend action pending further instructions.

There is doubt as to accuracy of report that Germany has presented something in the nature of an ultimatum to Roumania, and in these circumstances the question at issue requires to be presented in a somewhat different form. This will be done in further instructions which I hope to send you shortly.

Repeated to Bucharest.

¹ No. 50 to Angora, No. 52 to Athens, No. 42 to Belgrade, No. 38 to Warsaw.

² No. 390.

No. 423

*Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 72 Telegraphic [C 3412/3356/18]

ANGORA, *March 19, 1939, 3.0 a.m.*

My telegram No. 71.¹

I have now received letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs giving the reply of the Turkish Government as follows:

'Turkish Government have received no communication of this kind from the Roumanian Government. But if on the other hand Your Lordship implies that it is His Majesty's Government who desire to make to us certain proposals or suggestions, I beg you to assure the Secretary of State that my Government would be ready to study them in the friendly spirit which characterises the relations of our two countries.

'I hasten to add that Turkey will not fail to carry out the obligations involved in the Balkan Entente.'

Please send to Paris.

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.²

¹ No. 407.

² Repeated to Paris by the Foreign Office on March 20.

No. 424

*Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 73 Telegraphic [C 3413/3356/18]

ANGORA, *March 19, 1939, 3.0 a.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs handed me the letter and from subsequent

¹ No. 423.

conversation I think the position of the Turkish Government can be defined briefly as follows:

1. Balkan Pact would operate if Bulgaria either alone or with an outside ally were to attack any member.

2. If an outside Power were to attack a member of the Entente, Bulgaria remaining neutral, Pact entails no obligations.

3. Situation which I presented to the Turkish Government today on your instructions is a new one not covered by the Pact. The Turkish Government are evidently anxious for some lead from ourselves before committing themselves further. All I can say definitely is that I think they are well disposed.

Bulgarian President of the Council is still here. I hope to report result of his visit soon after its conclusion.

Please send to Paris.

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.²

² Repeated to Paris by the Foreign Office on March 20.

No. 425

*Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 11.50 p.m.)*

No. 68 Telegraphic [C 3433/3356/18]

ATHENS, March 19, 1939, 12.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 67.¹

Prime Minister said that he was consulting other members of the Balkan Entente and that until he knew their views he could give you no indication of the line that the Greek Government would take.

He pointed out that the initiative should properly be taken by Roumania[n] and Yugoslavian Government and he was surprised that the Roumanian Government, who now hold the chairmanship of the Balkan Entente, had made no communication to their partners. He had merely learned from Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires that Roumanian expert was engaged in commercial negotiations at Berlin.

His Excellency added that if he were in control of Balkan Entente he would at once declare it to be solidly opposed to further German aggression. The door must be bolted at all costs against German advance southwards. As it was, everything depended on Yugoslavia. A neutral Yugoslavia would make it impossible for Greece and Turkey to guarantee military assistance to Roumania.

He therefore hoped that, if His Majesty's Government and French Government decided that the German aggression against Roumania would be a *casus belli* for them, they would give the lead to the Balkan Entente by saying so openly as soon as possible.

The above remarks were made casually after an official dinner. They were more in the nature of thinking . . .² than a considered statement.

Repeated to Angora, Belgrade, Bucharest and Warsaw.

¹ No. 406.

² The text is here uncertain.

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 19, 4.40 p.m.)

No. 49 Telegraphic [C 3436/3356/18]

BELGRADE, March 19, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

At one stage in our conversations Prince Regent expatiated on difficulties of Yugoslavia's position. Apart from purely geographical situation the army was in process of being re-modelled. Whence moreover could it obtain supplies of war material in which it was lamentably deficient or even day to day replenishments of ammunition of which stocks were low?

On all counts it appears that Yugoslavia is in a parlous situation. I do not believe that she will in any circumstances commit herself in advance to war with Germany. If and when it comes she will remain neutral until the last possible moment and her neutrality under continuous pressure from Germany and Italy will be grudgingly benevolent to the enemy.

It is possible that if Roumania were in dire straits as a result of unprovoked internal [*sic* ? external] aggression public opinion and dynasties [*sic*] may impel Yugoslavia to give what help she could. But it is difficult in cold blood to say at what moment sentiment might get upper hand of reason.

If Hungary participated in attack against Roumania I think that Yugoslavia might march into Hungary whilst keeping clear of German troops. (Yugoslav-Roumanian Treaty² providing for common defence against Hungary or Bulgaria was renewed during the Bucharest meeting³ whilst on the other hand Prince Regent recently refused King of Roumania's suggestion for a new Treaty providing for mutual assistance against all comers.)

I think the Serbs (I cannot speak for Croatsians) would defend . . .⁴ territory (both Prince Regent and the Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as all other Serbs to whom I have spoken said that they would never cave in as Czechs had done) and that in later stages of a war if things were going well they might play a useful part if supplies could be got through to them.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

¹ No. 420.

² The Yugoslav-Roumanian Treaty of 1921 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 123, p. 1046.

³ The reference is possibly to talks between M. Gafencu and M. Stoyadinovitch which took place in Belgrade on February 1.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 427

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and Mr. Gascoigne
(Budapest)*

No. 39¹ Telegraphic [C 3359/71/21]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1939, 3.20 p.m.*

Paragraph two of Bucharest telegram No. 41² and paragraph 4 of Warsaw telegram No. 55.³

Please represent to Government to which you are accredited great importance which His Majesty's Government attach at this juncture to avoidance of any Hungarian-Roumanian clash over Ruthenia, and express hope that (*to Warsaw only*) they will continue to exert their influence in Budapest, and if necessary Bucharest, to this end: (*to Budapest only*) that they will shape their policy accordingly.

Repeated to Bucharest.

¹ No. 39 to Warsaw, No. 7 to Budapest.

² No. 307.

³ No. 392.

No. 428

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 44 Telegraphic [C 3538/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 19, 1939, 4.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 45.¹

Sir A. Cadogan cross-questioned M. Tilea last night. He had been instructed by Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs to give categorical denial of ultimatum story and informed that negotiations with German Government were continuing 'within the cadre which he knew'.

He said he was convinced of truth of ultimatum story which he had received from a private source in Roumania. He added however that the ultimatum had been presented about ten days before the Czech crisis and had been turned down then by the Roumanian Government.

Roumanian Minister of Economics had rung him up yesterday and said discussions with Germans were proceeding on questions of principle, not details, and that he hoped thereby to gain time. Minister of Economics had not denied truth of ultimatum.

Sir A. Cadogan observed that neither had he confirmed it. Nothing however would shake M. Tilea. He said there were many cross-currents in Roumania, he was convinced that ultimatum had been presented and refused. What he now feared was that refusal would not be maintained.

Sir A. Cadogan said in these circumstances it might be possible that there was some truth in both stories. Ultimatum having now disappeared as basis of negotiation, M. Gafencu's remarks to you might be justified and his

¹ No. 399.

remark that German negotiators were being more conciliatory might be for the moment true.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade, Angora and Paris.

No. 429

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 45 Telegraphic [C 3538/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 19, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Conflict of information is disconcerting.

Please endeavour at once to see King and ask him to state to you fully and frankly (a) precise sequence of events, (b) present position and (c) views and intentions of the Roumanian Government as to the future as they see it.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade, Angora and Paris.

¹ No. 428.

No. 430

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)¹

No. 3 Telegraphic² [N 1484/30/59]

KOVNO, March 19, 1939, 7.40 p.m.

Addressed to Riga No. 3 March 19.

Your telegram No. 4³ to Foreign Office.

Lithuanian General Staff categorically deny the story of the Lithuanian Military Attaché at Riga. They admit one or two isolated attempts to smuggle arms but say that these were frustrated by the customs officials.

2. As to the *coup* at Memel, German Memellanders have, for a long time, been in virtual control of Memel and Lithuanians, whilst hoping to retain port facilities, have become quite resigned to the possibility, at any moment, of 'Anschluss', which, no doubt, could be effected without serious opposition—merely by formal declaration by Neumann⁴ or the Directorate. At the moment, whilst there is tension, there is no sign of panic either at Kovno or at Memel.

3. Secretary General of Ministry for Foreign Affairs informs me that Minister for Foreign Affairs has the power to negotiate, should he be invited to do so by German Government whilst passing through Berlin, but that he has no power to sign anything away.

Repeated to Berlin and Foreign Office No. 11.

¹ Dispatches and telegrams from Kovno were normally addressed to Riga and repeated to the Foreign Office because His Majesty's Minister at Riga was accredited to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Kovno and Tallinn were consular posts.

² This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 3 and was repeated as No. 11 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 19 at 8.50 p.m.

³ No. 398.

⁴ Leader of the Memel National Socialist Party.

No. 431

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 22)

No. 20 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3875/3556/18]

BUCHAREST, March 19, 1939

My telegram No. 45.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me in personal confidence that he has given the Roumanian Minister a tremendous head washing. He had instructed him to come here at once and report but so far relented as to let him wait until after the visit of the French President.²

¹ No. 399.

² The President of the French Republic was to pay an official visit to London, March 21-4.

No. 432

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 189 [C 3444/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 19, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador this afternoon, M. Maisky mentioned the matter of Danzig, in regard to which I said that, as at present advised, the line that I should propose to take with M. Beck on that matter would be to say that, if he found it possible to reach a settlement with the German Government in regard to Danzig, well and good; if, however, out of the Danzig question emerged a threat to Polish independence, that would at once, in my view, constitute a question of interest to us all.

2. M. Maisky gave me a copy of the protest¹ addressed by the Soviet Government to the German Government in regard to the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia, which he told me would be published in the press tomorrow morning.

3. Before he left M. Maisky spoke of the information conveyed to him and to us by M. Tilea concerning the alleged German demand upon Roumania. I told him everything that we knew on that subject, and he confessed himself not less mystified than myself as to the true explanation of the episode. The first reaction of M. Litvinov, as I should have observed from Your Excellency's report,² was one of astonishment that the Roumanian Government had not approached the Soviet Government direct for assistance in the emergency of which M. Tilea had spoken. I said that this did not seem in any way surprising to me, inasmuch as the Roumanian Government denied that such an emergency existed. Obviously, if they had been proceeding on the same information as that which M. Tilea had conveyed to us, the first thing they would have done would have been to approach the Soviet Government, and the fact that they had not done so seemed strong evidence that the information at their disposal differed from that at the disposal of M. Tilea.

¹ See No. 475.

² See No. 403.

4. I told M. Maisky, as he left, that I was entirely at his disposal at any time, and I hoped that he would keep me informed of any information that he might receive from his Government. I would also endeavour to do the same in regard to him.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 433

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 190 [C 3445/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 19, 1939

Sir,

The Soviet Ambassador asked to see me this afternoon. M. Maisky said that he had no doubt I had received information from Your Excellency as to the two conversations you had had with M. Litvinov.¹ M. Maisky said that he wished to develop somewhat the arguments that had been in M. Litvinov's mind in regard to the method of procedure that he had suggested by way of conference between Great Britain, France, Poland, Russia and Roumania at Bucharest. In M. Litvinov's view this would be the quickest method of attaining results and, although he was open-minded about the venue of such a conference, he thought the psychological effect of holding it at Bucharest would be valuable both at Bucharest and at Berlin.

2. I told M. Maisky that we had had an opportunity of considering this proposition this morning and that we were wholly at one with M. Litvinov in feeling the desire for finding means to make speedy progress. We certainly had no wish to waste time in prolonged and argumentative diplomatic exchanges. At the same time, we were sensible of two difficulties in the proposal that M. Litvinov had made. First, we could hardly in present circumstances manage to send a responsible Minister to take part in the conference, and, if this were not possible, the desired advantage in the way of quick decision would not, in fact, be obtained. Secondly, and perhaps more important, we thought that to hold such a conference as M. Litvinov suggested without a certainty that it would be successful was dangerous.

3. We were at present employed upon the consideration of a proposal not altogether dissimilar, but one which we thought was perhaps better calculated to yield the results we all desired. I was not in a position at present to speak in detail of this, as we were having a further meeting this afternoon to consider it, but in essence our notion was that it might be possible quite quickly to find means by which Great Britain, France, Poland and Russia could publicly assert their solidarity of attitude in a form that would, I thought, achieve both the principal objects that M. Litvinov, not less than we ourselves, had in view. If some such public action could speedily be taken, it would at once constitute a plain signal of danger to the German Government and might be expected to afford a rallying point and vitalising force for

¹ See Nos. 403 and 421.

the smaller States. Provided we could get so far, I thought that it would then become desirable that we should together consider what precise action it would be in the power of each of us to take in particular circumstances, and with that examination we should also hope to associate the giving of encouragement to the smaller States to act in concert both with one another and with ourselves. M. Maisky did not press me closely upon the details of what I had said to him and seemed prepared to give general agreement to the line that I had indicated. He did ask me whether we should rule out the idea of a conference, to which I replied that I should certainly not rule it out, but that I thought it was desirable to make further progress, as I thought we might expect to do more rapidly by the method I had outlined, before attempting to decide whether or not the conference procedure would be appropriate at a later stage. I told him that I should hope to be in a position to telegraph further instructions² to Your Excellency this evening for communication to the Soviet Government.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² See No. 446.

No. 434

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20)

No. 340 [C 3470/19/18]

BERLIN, March 19, 1939

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of despatch No. 5 from His Majesty's Military Attaché to this Embassy, dated the 18th March, respecting the military importance of the absorption of Moravia and Bohemia in the German Reich.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 434

Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir N. Henderson

No. 5

BERLIN, March 18, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to point out that the absorption of Moravia and Bohemia within the Reich has far greater military importance than even the obviously considerable strategic and economic advantages which it confers upon Germany.

Without going into details which can be better obtained from other sources, it is sufficient to point out that, with what appears to be the complete disbandment of the Czech army, the armament, equipment and war reserves for a considerable proportion of the ex-Czecho-Slovak army now fall into German hands. It is reasonable to suppose that the bulk of the war stocks and reserves for the whole army are situated in Moravia and Bohemia.

Although the arms and equipment so taken over are naturally different from those in use in the German army, and the ammunition also is of other calibres, the number of divisions—probably up to forty—which can be created is such that it will undoubtedly pay the Germans in the meantime to make full use of them. On service they would naturally have to be kept in special formations and employed as far as possible in one or two definite zones to avoid complications of supply. But it must be remembered that ample war stocks of ammunition and replacements are presumably available, and that the factories for producing them are in operation and at the disposal of the Germans.

It appears at the moment unlikely that the Germans intend to use Czech personnel in any large numbers. That is a question which is not yet clear. On the other hand, there are a large number of Sudeten who have completed their term of service in the Czech army, who have been trained in the use of Czech material, and who are immediately available. Rough calculations give a figure of at least 300,000, though I am not in a position to make accurate estimates.

There are obvious disadvantages in having part of an army differently armed and equipped from the bulk thereof. But in Germany's present situation, where she is only capable of arming rather more than 100 divisions against her man-power potential of something little short of 300, it is reasonably clear that, in spite of the complications involved and as a temporary expedient, she may be expected to make immediate use of the 'gift' of armament for providing divisions which will increase her fighting power on land by probably much more than 25 per cent.

But the process of doing so will throw an even increased strain on the already highly-tried German Staff and Corps of Officers and n.c.o.s, and will still further complicate the conditions under which the army is finding its feet. Until the process has been completed, war should find the German army in an even greater state of 'flux' than it has been in hitherto.

I have, &c.,
F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 435

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 20, 12.15 p.m.)

No. 147 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3482/19/18]

BERLIN, March 20, 1939

Your telegram No. 72.¹

French Counsellor informs me that his Ambassador left here yesterday for Paris and hopes to return on Wednesday or Thursday. He says that the Ambassador is definitely of the opinion that the *fait accompli* in Czecho-

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation recorded in No. 417.

Slovakia should be promptly recognised and will advise his Government that delay will only irritate the Germans.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 436

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 20, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 119 Telegraphic [C 3509/3356/18]

PARIS, March 20, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

Sir E. Phipps telegram No. 115.¹

Ministry for Foreign Affairs promises written reply early this afternoon after it has received the approval of the President of the Council. His information continues to be that Roumanian Minister in London was amplifying his statements regarding a German ultimatum. In the circumstances he does not feel that the matter is of such urgency as was at first feared.

¹ No. 408.

No. 437

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 54 Telegraphic [C 3585/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 20, 1939, 2.45 p.m.

[Your tel. No. 71].²

I spoke this morning to Minister for Foreign Affairs as instructed. Count Csaky assured me that Hungarian Government also attached the greatest importance to avoiding any clash with Roumania. He had more than once given the most solemn assurance to M. Gafencu that Hungary had no intention of attacking Roumania. At the same time he said that he would be most grateful if His Majesty's Government would exercise their influence with Roumanian Government to persuade them to stop this mobilization. This, according to his information, was going on throughout Roumania, including Dobrudja, and could not but arouse grave suspicions in Hungary as to Roumania's intentions.

I told Count Csaky that Hungary too appeared to be taking very considerable military measures. He replied that these were confined to mobilization of three divisions which had . . . ³ meant as a response to Roumanian military movements.

When Count Csaky mentioned the possibility of Roumanian attack on Hungary I told him that I could not conceive that in the present state of Europe Roumania would dream of attacking Hungary nor could I imagine any reason why she should.

¹ No. 427.

² These words appear to have been accidentally omitted.

³ The text is here uncertain.

I told Count Csaky that I would convey to you at once the wish which he had expressed.

Repeated to Warsaw and Bucharest.

No. 438

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 3612/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 20, 1939, 5.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 45.¹

I called on the Polish Ambassador this morning and after explaining my purpose I asked whether there was anything he could add to the account of his (? audience)² contained in Warsaw telegram No. 58,³ e.g. had the King given any indication that he anticipated any *immediate* action by Germany against Roumania? The reply was definitely negative.

Please repeat to Paris.

¹ No. 429.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ No. 400.

No. 439

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 3626/3356/18]

ATHENS, March 20, 1939, 6.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 68.¹

Following is translation of Memorandum handed to me by Prime Minister today.

'In the event of aggression against Roumania, Greece will fulfil her obligations under the Balkan Pact.

'As regards a guarantee of Roumanian frontier going beyond the limits of Balkan Pact, Greece will examine sympathetically and in collaboration with Turkey and Yugoslavia any Roumanian proposal, while taking into account eventual attitude of Great Britain and France.'

Repeated to Angora, Belgrade, Bucharest and Warsaw.

¹ No. 425.

No. 440

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 121 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3540/3356/18]

PARIS, March 20, 1939

My telegram No. 119.¹

Reply of French Government states that Ministry of Foreign Affairs have received similar information to that of His Majesty's Government. It appears

¹ No. 436.

that the German Government are making economic demands on Roumanian Government which there is reason to fear may in the near future be supported by political and military pressure destined to assure to Germany complete control, political as well as economic over Roumania.

French Government agrees that France and Great Britain should decide on a common attitude and considers that if new German enterprise succeeded (even if directed for the moment only towards the East) it would result in German hegemony over Europe with all the menaces which this would entail to vital interests of France and Great Britain.

French Government are making enquiries of Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet Governments whose replies will have an important bearing. As for the French Government they consider Roumania is the last obstacle to triumph of German imperialism and control by Germany of resources of Central and Eastern Europe. In face of this common danger French Government declare themselves ready to assist Roumania if she is the object of a German aggression. But this assistance can only be fully effective in so far as French and British Governments agree to offer a common resistance. French Government are therefore ready to collaborate with British Government in any examination of concerted action. Text follows by bag.²

I asked Political Director who handed me the Note whether it meant that France would go to Roumania's assistance if she were the object of German aggression, irrespective of replies of Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet Governments. He replied that it did.

Repeated to Bucharest, Berlin, Moscow and Warsaw.

² See No. 451, enclosure 2.

No. 441

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 20, 7.40 p.m.)*

No. 155 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1500/30/59]

BERLIN, March 20, 1939

The Assistant Military Attaché was informed in *the strictest confidence* this evening by his Lithuanian colleague that the Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Herr von Ribbentrop yesterday to discuss Memel. Herr von Ribbentrop stated that the Lithuanian Government must hand over Memel graciously to Germany. If there were any resistance or German blood were spilt, the matter would have to be handed over to the German military authorities, in which case the matter might not eventually stop at the Memel territorial frontier. Herr von Ribbentrop made it quite clear that it would be useless for the Lithuanian Government to appeal for help to outside Powers and suggested that the Lithuanian Prime Minister should proceed to Berlin to settle the matter. The Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs refused on the ground that the matter must be considered at Kovno. In reply to the

question as to how soon a decision was required, Herr von Ribbentrop replied 'three or four days'.

The Lithuanian Military Attaché believed the Lithuanian Government might approach the interested Powers.

Not repeated to Kovno.

No. 442

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 60 Telegraphic [C 3606/92/55]

WARSAW, March 20, 1939, 8.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 56.¹

As I had heard rumours of German military activity in East Prussia I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning if he could confirm them. M. Beck told me that he had similar information but it was not fully confirmed. He did not think that it would be directed against Danzig but it was possible that Germans were making a military demonstration on the Lithuanian frontier with a view to applying pressure to Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit to Berlin.

I also mentioned the rumours that Lithuania was going to follow example of Czecho-Slovakia in asking for German protection. He said that he had heard these rumours but had no confirmation of them.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 391.

No. 443

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 20, 10.15 p.m.)

No. 56 Telegraphic [C 3586/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 20, 1939, 8.35 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 44 and 45.¹

I felt only way to deal with the matter was to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs of your instructions and ask him to arrange audience at which I should like him to be present. This was agreed and the King who [? show]²ed great friendliness assured me positively there had at no moment been question of ultimatum. There was much in the German proposals that was unpalatable but no sort of exception could be taken to the manner in which they had been presented and pressed. I was to believe if war ultimatum was presented I would be informed at once and His Majesty hoped that his Minister's false alarm would not lead you to conclusion that conduct of Roumanian policy was not serious.

Roumania would resist German pressure but she could not do so indefinitely without support.

¹ Nos. 428-9.

² The text is here uncertain.

I am inclined to conclude that before leaving for London Roumanian Minister received from the King some sort of general instruction to use every effort to convince his [*sic* ? H.M.] Government of the necessities of the situation in South-Eastern Europe and that he set about his task with impulsive naïveté.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade, Angora and Paris.

No. 444

Viscount Halifax to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo), Sir W. Selby (Lisbon), and Sir M. Peterson (Bagdad)

No. 202¹ Telegraphic [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 20, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

My telegram to Paris No. 94,² which is addressed also to Moscow and Warsaw, is repeated to you for your own information only and should not be communicated to the Government to which you are accredited pending further instructions.

¹ No. 202 to Cairo, No. 44 to Lisbon, No. 73 to Bagdad.

² No. 446.

No. 445

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens), Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade), Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), and Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 57¹ Telegraphic [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 20, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 68² (48)³ (73)⁴ (45)⁵.

1. My telegram No. 56 (46) (54) (46)⁶ is being repeated to you for your personal and confidential information and not for communication to the Government to which you are accredited.

2. If Government to which you are accredited asks what present position is you should say that His Majesty's Government are examining the situation in the light of the replies which they have received from the various Governments to their original approach.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Warsaw and Berlin.

¹ No. 57 to Athens, No. 47 to Belgrade, No. 55 to Angora, No. 47 to Bucharest.

² No. 425.

³ No. 420.

⁴ No. 424.

⁵ No. 399.

⁶ No. 446 was repeated to Athens as No. 56, to Belgrade as No. 46, to Angora as No. 54, and to Bucharest as No. 46.

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris), Sir W. Seeds (Moscow), and Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 94¹ Telegraphic [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 20, 1939, 11.5 p.m.*

My telegram No. 88² (31)³ (38)⁴.

1. In spite of doubts as to accuracy of reports of German ultimatum to Roumania, recent German absorption of Czecho-Slovakia shows clearly that German Government are resolved to go beyond their hitherto avowed aim of consolidation of German race. They have now extended their conquest to another nation and if this should prove to be part of a definite policy of domination there is no State in Europe which is not directly or ultimately threatened.

2. In the circumstances thus created it seems to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to be desirable to proceed without delay to the organisation of mutual support on the part of all those who realise the necessity of protecting international society from further violation of fundamental laws on which it rests.

3. As a first step they propose that the French, Soviet and Polish Governments should join with His Majesty's Government in signing and publishing a formal Declaration the terms of which they suggest should be on the lines of the following:—

'We the undersigned, duly authorised to that effect, hereby declare that, inasmuch as peace and security in Europe are matters of common interest and concern, and since European peace and security may be affected by any action which constitutes a threat to the political independence of any European State, our respective Governments hereby undertake immediately to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any such action'.⁵

4. It appears to us that the publication of such a Declaration would in itself be a valuable contribution to the stability of Europe and we should propose that publication should be followed by an examination by the signatories of any specific situation which requires it, with a view to determining the nature of any action which might be taken.

5. Please endeavour immediately to obtain the views of Government to which you are accredited. His Majesty's Government would be prepared to sign Declaration immediately the three other Governments indicate their readiness to do so.

6. We should propose to say nothing of this to the other Governments concerned before the four Powers are agreed on the Declaration.

¹ No. 94 to Paris, No. 34 to Moscow, No. 43 to Warsaw.

² No. 388.

³ No. 389.

⁴ No. 422.

⁵ For the original draft of this Declaration, see No. 506, note 2.

Repeated to Athens, Bucharest, Angora, Belgrade, Berlin, Cairo, Lisbon and Bagdad.

No. 447

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 61 *Telegraphic* [C 3665/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 20, 1939, 11.11 p.m.

Your telegram No. 39.¹

Mr. Hudson and I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning. We endeavoured to ascertain what attitude Polish Government would adopt in the event of Roumania being attacked by Germany or Hungary. M. Beck was as evasive as he had been in our conversation of March 18². He said that hitherto Roumanian Government had not made a similar enquiry of Polish Government, and that while it was a matter for serious reflection it was not one on which any decision could be hastily taken.

2. We begged M. Beck at any rate to ponder over this question as it was highly probable that it would arise in the course of his conversations in London.

3. We asked His Excellency what his latest news was as to tension between Hungary and Roumania and M. Beck again expressed the hope that some settlement might be reached. He assured us that he was in no way relaxing his efforts to secure such a settlement and suggested that Polish and British representatives at Budapest and Bucharest should collaborate to this end. He thought Italian Government could play a useful role owing to her [*sic*] influence in Hungary and Roumania and he had urged this upon Count Ciano during his visit. He expressed the view that Roumania would not follow example of Czecho-Slovakia in offering no resistance.

4. We afterwards saw Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs who was latterly Minister of [*sic* ? at] Bucharest. He took a far graver view of the situation than M. Beck and thought that there might be collusion between Germany and Hungary and even some arrangement by which the latter should with German approval attack Roumania with object of obtaining Transylvania. Germany would then apply pressure to secure an economic hegemony over Roumania. He did not think that Roumania would fight in such an event but only if her very existence was threatened.

5. Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs thought that there was some element of truth in M. Tilea's story about an economic ultimatum as Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs had told them when here that he was prepared to make any economic sacrifices provided he could maintain his territorial frontiers.

6. Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs was satisfied that Poland was not included in Germany's designs at all events in the near future and thought

¹ No. 427.

² See No. 400.

apparently that a Russian or Ukraine adventure was more probable and would keep her occupied.

Repeated to Berlin, Budapest and Bucharest.

No. 448

*Letter from Mr. Chamberlain to Signor Mussolini*¹

[C 3858/15/18]

10 DOWNING STREET, March 20, 1939

Dear Signor Mussolini,

Last September I made an appeal to you, to which you responded at once. As a result peace was preserved, to the relief of the whole world.

In the critical situation which has arisen from the events of last week, I feel impelled to address you again. You will remember that, in the course of that visit to Rome last January which I shall always recollect with deep satisfaction and pleasure, you asked me whether I had any points which I wished to raise with you. I replied that there was one which was causing me considerable anxiety. I had heard many rumours that Herr Hitler was planning some new *coup*, and I knew that he was pushing forward his armament production though I could see no quarter from which he was in the slightest danger of attack. You then expressed the opinion that Herr Hitler wanted peace in which to fuse together the Greater Reich, and that you did not believe that he had any new adventure in mind.

Whatever may have been his intentions then, he has in fact carried out a measure which appears to be in complete contradiction to the assurances he gave me. You will have noted from my speech of the 17th of this month the view that I take of this new and most disturbing move, which has created the most profound resentment in this country and elsewhere.

What above all has impressed everyone here is the implication of this departure from the principles laid down previously by the German Government inasmuch as for the first time they have incorporated in the Reich a large non-German population. Does this mean that the events in Czecho-Slovakia are only the prelude to further attempts at control of other States?

If it does I foresee that sooner or later, and probably sooner, another major war is inevitable. It is inconceivable that any country should want such a

¹ As the result of information received in the Foreign Office by March 17, it was feared that Signor Mussolini might be proposing to emulate Herr Hitler by taking some equally dramatic step, either (and more probably) by the presentation of the Italian demands on France in the form of an ultimatum, under threat, open or implied, of war, or possibly by a declaration of Italian intentions to proceed immediately to the occupation of Albania. There was a possibility that Signor Mussolini might make such an announcement either on March 21 when the Fascist Grand Council met, or on March 23, at the meeting of the new Chamber of the Fasci and Corporations. It was thought in the Foreign Office that a personal and confidential message to Signor Mussolini stressing Anglo-French solidarity in refusing to consider claims presented in that manner might have a deterrent effect, but that a message sent without such a warning would be liable to be interpreted by Signor Mussolini as a sign of weakness. The letter as finally sent appears not to have been drafted in the Foreign Office.

war, but if the alternative before the other States of Europe is that one by one they are to be dominated by force they will assuredly prefer to fight for their liberties.

You will I know realise that I do not seek to interfere with the Rome-Berlin Axis. I fully understand that that is regarded as a fixed part of your foreign policy. But I have always believed that peace could be established provided that no one Power was determined to dominate all the others. What has now happened has raised the gravest doubts as to whether this condition is present. Fresh moves in the same direction would turn those doubts into certainties.

You told me that your policy was one of peace and that you would at any time be willing to use your influence in that direction. I earnestly hope that you may feel it possible, in any way that may be open to you, to take such action in these anxious days as may allay present tension and do something to restore the confidence that has been shattered.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

No. 449

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 127 [C 3948/19/18]

My Lord,

PRAGUE, *March 20, 1939*

I have the honour to inform you that I have ample reason to believe the facts of President Hacha's visit to Berlin to be as follows. My information has been derived from a number of first-class sources.

2. On Monday, the 13th March, the Cabinet in Prague knew that a military invasion of Bohemia and Moravia by Germany was imminent. They had been unable to obtain from the German Government any statement of their intentions, and therefore decided to make a direct appeal to Herr Hitler in a last effort to avert the occupation of their country. President Hacha offered to make this appeal himself. The German Chargé d'Affaires was informed that day of the President's desire to be received, and requested, before submitting the application, that it should be made in writing. At 2 p.m. the following Tuesday afternoon the Chargé d'Affaires replied that Herr Hitler accepted the application and would be glad if the President would see him in Berlin at 6 that evening. So short a notice was impossible because, by reason of his age and the bad weather, Dr. Hacha could not go by aeroplane. He therefore left at 4 p.m., accompanied by the Foreign Minister, M. Chvalkovsky, in a special train which arrived very late. The delay was presumably not intentional, as it occurred also on the return journey.

3. On the eve of their departure for Berlin the Hungarian ultimatum, expiring in twelve hours, was delivered by the Hungarian Minister. At half-past 4, that is, after they had started, the head of the police at Moravska

Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau) telephoned to Prague that German troops were in that town and asked for instructions. This news that the German invasion had already reached that important town was first communicated to the President and the Foreign Minister on their arrival in Berlin.

4. The President was received with due consideration in Berlin, but his Foreign Minister was unable to obtain any information in advance to prepare the President for what was likely to be said to him by Herr Hitler. The only warning given by Herr von Ribbentrop was that, like other nocturnal interviews with the Chancellor, the forthcoming one might be lengthy.

5. President Hacha began it by saying that the Czecho-Slovak Government had done everything they could to meet German wishes. Nevertheless, they had reason to fear that an occupation of their country was contemplated. Their fate was, of course, in Herr Hitler's hands, and they wished to know what complaints the Chancellor had so that they could satisfy them and avoid invasion. Herr Hitler replied that the Czecho-Slovak Government had not met German wishes, that the German minority had been scandalously maltreated, and that he had decided to put a stop to this abuse. Bohemia and Moravia would therefore be occupied in accordance with his inflexible will ('unbeugsamer Wille'). This action would not be averted even if England and France declared war. He had, however, granted the President's request for an interview in the hope of being able to save bloodshed, for if any resistance took place Prague would be bombarded and all the forces at Germany's command brought into operation. Field-Marshal Göring, General Keitel and perhaps other military personages were present on the German side in addition to Herr von Ribbentrop. Field-Marshal Göring explained later that organised resistance was meant and that the Czech Government and people would not be held responsible for failure to prevent obviously sporadic resistance on a small scale. From good sources I have heard as details, which confirm the foregoing, though they may or may not in themselves be absolutely accurate, that the threat was made that Prague would be razed to the ground, and also that Field-Marshal Göring said that, while he did not wish to bombard Prague, should he do so, he would try out some special new bombs. It is said too, that President Hacha was told that 600 bombers were ready for the operation.

6. President Hacha made it clear that there could be no question of any organised resistance, and said he wished to telephone to his Government so that they could take all measures possible to prevent it. This he was able to do at once, as the line with Prague had evidently been kept clear for immediate use. The joint declaration subsequently published was produced at an early stage of the proceedings for the President's signature, and perhaps also another paper requiring not only the Czech military but also the civil authorities to abstain from any interferences with the German occupation; for example, by withholding public utility services. The Cabinet at Prague meanwhile did everything in its power to see that instructions to meet the German requirements reached those concerned in time. President Hacha, who had, of course, come to Berlin realising that he and his Government had

no option but to comply with German demands, felt compelled to sign the joint declaration in the hope of securing better treatment for his country and as a proof of his good faith in promising to do everything possible to prevent resistance and save bloodshed. I understand that he took no part in drafting it and was only allowed to make one small alteration by the removal of words stating that he was acting on behalf of his Government.

7. It is believed that Herr Hitler admitted that his unalterable decision to invade Bohemia and Moravia had been taken already, either on Sunday, the 12th March, or as an immediate sequel to the allegations of maltreatment that day of members of the German minority. When President Hacha ventured to suggest that the stories of maltreatment might be exaggerated, Herr Hitler said he knew that they were perfectly true and gave the impression of being genuinely convinced of their truth. No doubt he has developed the practice and the timing of self-deception to a fine art, but his attitude suggested that he might really be the prisoner of his own propaganda machine, despite his personal mastery of the tricks of that trade.

8. President Hacha's action was approved over the telephone by his Government in Prague, but it is perfectly clear from the foregoing—and, indeed, from the whole history of this country—that his action and its endorsement by the Government in Prague were in no sense voluntary. They were no more voluntary than was so in former days the surrender of valuables to an armed highwayman who pointed a heavily-loaded blunderbuss at a helpless victim and said: 'Your money or your life.' The least shred of justification for any hypocritical attempt to suggest that there was acquiescence in advance was, in any case, destroyed by the facts that, without any prior warning or answer to the attempts of the Czech Government to consult the German Government, preparation for the aggression must have been made weeks in advance, that the unalterable decision to invade was no doubt taken one or more days in advance, and that the invasion had already reached the important town of Mährisch-Ostrau many hours before the joint declaration was signed by President Hacha under the extreme duress described above.

9. The effect of the strain and agitation on the President is said to have been such that he required medical attention. This possibility had apparently been foreseen, since even at that late hour a doctor was in attendance who gave an injection. This last detail, although based on good evidence, may be less reliable than the other facts here recorded and is only mentioned for the sake of completeness and in confirmation of any report which may come to you from other sources. No suggestion has reached me as to the precise stage when the injection was administered or that it affected the judgment and action of the President, who was, in any case, accompanied by his Foreign Minister.

10. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
BASIL NEWTON

*Mr. Pares (Bratislava) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 25)**No. 15 [C 3973/19/18]*

BRATISLAVA, March 20, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava, Slovakia, presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of his despatch No. 10 to His Majesty's Minister, Prague, dated the 20th March, respecting the crisis in Slovakia and the declaration of Slovak independence.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 450

*Mr. Pares to Mr. Newton**No. 10.*

BRATISLAVA, March 20, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to report that whatever may have been the origins of the crisis which led up to the declaration of Slovak independence last Tuesday—and there are many persons who are convinced that the Czech *coup* on the night of Thursday, the 9th March, was the result of German prompting—it has been obvious here that Germany played the most important part in the development of events after the crisis had begun. On the afternoon of Friday the German party held a large meeting here in which the speakers bitterly attacked the Prague 'Bolshevists'. The sympathy of the party with the Hlinka guard, then in opposition to the Government of Sivak and Teplansky, was openly displayed by hanging out the flag of the Hlinka guard from the balcony of the headquarters of the German party between those of the German party itself. Yesterday one of the semi-official organs of the Government, 'Slovenska Pravda', printed a leading article in which it was frankly stated that Karmasin was with Dr. Tiso, Durcansky, Sidor and one of Mach's close associates during the first discussions held by the Slovak autonomists on Friday morning after the Czech *coup*. How little the Slovak population of Bratislava interested itself in the first day's events was indicated by the small number of persons who took part in the first demonstrations during the afternoon. The participants were an evil-looking rabble of the lowest possible type equipped with heavy poles, and the speakers who addressed them from the balcony of the Slovak National Theatre were little better. During the evening the Hlinka guard organised processions composed of less disreputable elements, mainly students and young men.

2. Besides affording Durcansky a refuge in Vienna and allowing him to incite the Hlinka guard to revolt against Sidor's Government in a speech broadcast by the Vienna wireless station, the German party are believed to have protected Murgas in their headquarters when he was fleeing from the Government's agents. The car of the German Consul here is said to have been used to convey Durcansky to Vienna in order to enable him to escape

arrest when crossing the bridge-head into Germany. On Saturday, when Sidor's Government was trying to reconcile the various Opposition groups, the German party did their utmost to weaken him by refusing to recognise the Government, and by assisting its opponents in the Hlinka guard, with publicity for their denunciations and incitements to disobedience. During the afternoon arms and ammunition, believed to be of German type and brought over the bridge and even across the river, were distributed to the German organisation F.S. (Freiwilliger Schutzdienst) who then occupied the principal Government building together with some members of the Hlinka guard. An English journalist who visited the building said that the proportion of Germans to Slovaks was about twelve to one. An endeavour was also made by the German party to arrange a strike in local factories as I have heard from the manager of a mill here, but without success.

3. But it is doubtful if these efforts to create confusion and assist the Germanophil extremists would alone have produced results. The decisive factor was undoubtedly Dr. Tiso's visit to Berlin. I have talked with several Slovak officials, and also with one of Dr. Tiso's intimate advisers, and have been given to understand that the proposals made by Herr Hitler were practically an ultimatum. Dr. Tiso was told that if Slovakia did not declare her independence Germany would leave her to the tender mercies of Poland and Hungary. It is certain that on Monday night, before the Slovak Diet met, German journalists, who doubtless obtained their information from the best sources, were announcing that the decision regarding Slovak independence could not be altered by the paltry deliberations of the Slovak Diet. Sano Mach, in a speech delivered the same evening, practically promised that Slovak independence would be declared the next day. I have even heard that there was no debate in the Diet since the Deputies felt that they had no choice but to accept the terms offered them. A speech made by Dr. Tiso last Sunday, in which he said that his journey to Berlin 'saved Slovakia from certain ruin', appears to confirm the interpretation of events given above.

4. The reception given to the declaration on Tuesday by the people of Bratislava was lukewarm indeed. There were no manifestations of joy and the townsfolk went about their normal business as if nothing had happened. This lack of interest was already apparent on the previous evening when I had listened to Mach's speech. The majority of the audience who collected to hear Mach announce that independence would be declared were Germans and some of the Slovaks present actually grumbled to themselves or heckled. In all, the crowd cannot have numbered more than 1,500 persons, which is a small figure for such an occasion in a town of 150,000 inhabitants. The methods by which the meeting was summoned are interesting. Sano Mach had been brought back from his confinement in Moravia by members of the German party and immediately after his return he had a conversation in my hotel with two of Karmasin's principal advisers. The leaflets announcing that he and Tuka would speak in the evening were printed in Slovak, but bore the name of a German firm of printers in Bratislava.

5. The German party has been implicated in one at least of the explosions which occurred on Monday evening after Mach's speech. The municipal commission which conducted the official enquiry found that the bomb used was of German manufacture, and a member of the German party who lives in Engerau across the river was arrested in connexion with the outrage.

6. A week after the declaration of independence the inhabitants of Bratislava are still unable to show great enthusiasm for the present state of affairs. The general impression is one of apathy or pessimism. The apprehensions caused by the appearance of German troops in Slovakia have not yet been allayed. Last Saturday night a manifestation was arranged at which Tuka and Mach spoke. Apart from the school children and members of the youth organisations of the Hlinka guard, who were ordered to appear, the attendance was small. Most of the crowd seemed to have come out of curiosity which seem to have been quickly dispelled since in half an hour nearly all those who were free to go away had disappeared, leaving about 3,000 behind.

7. I noticed that Sidor, who has practically resigned from the Cabinet, and is viewed with extreme disfavour by the Germanophiles, received a far warmer ovation at this meeting than even Mach or Dr. Tiso. His name was not included on the list of speakers announced beforehand, but he spoke just before the end. The crowd demanded that he should not be made to leave Bratislava, but the truth seems to be that though he wanted to go north to Zilina he was ordered to remain by the Government.

8. The real power in the Government seems to be in the hands of a very small group. All the recent negotiations in Vienna have been carried on by a small consortium composed of Tuka, Durcansky and Mach who is not even a member of the Cabinet. Dr. Tiso usually goes with them, but it seems doubtful whether his voice counts for very much. The Cabinet, as constituted at first, seemed to be a Cabinet of concentration and reconciliation, but Sidor has now withdrawn and Sivak, who must certainly be equally, if not more compromised in the eyes of his extremist colleagues, does not attend the meetings of the Cabinet very frequently. Pruzinsky is reported to be *persona non grata* with the Germans. The result is that the Germanophiles now have the upper hand.

9. There are indications that this group may be embarking on a policy which will cause some embarrassment to the Polish and Hungarian Governments. Mach in his speech on Saturday night made some references to the Slovaks now living in Hungary, while yesterday's 'Slovak' prints a telegram sent to Murgas by the commune of Javorina (occupied by Poland last November) in which he is entreated to set them free at once.

I have, &c.,
P. PARES

Mr. R. I. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21)

No. 343 [C 3604/3356/18]

PARIS, March 20, 1939

His Majesty's Representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Paris telegram No. 121¹ of the 20th March, 1939, has the honour to transmit to him a copy of his Note to the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, dated the 18th March, and of the reply from the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, dated the 20th March, respecting German pressure on Roumania.

¹ No. 440.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN NO. 451

Note from His Majesty's Embassy, Paris, to Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 18, 1939

His Majesty's Embassy presents its compliments to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and, under instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honour to state that the Roumanian Minister in London informed Lord Halifax on the 17th March that he understood that the Roumanian Government had been asked by the German Government to agree to give the latter the monopoly of Roumanian exports, and to accept measures of industrial restrictions inside Roumania in German interests. On this basis Germany would guarantee the frontiers of Roumania.

2. The Roumanian Government was disposed to regard this as in the nature of an ultimatum, although Lord Halifax understands that, on their refusal to accept these terms, further terms have been suggested.

3. The Roumanian Minister emphasised the extreme urgency of the matter, and proceeded to ask whether His Majesty's Government would be able to give a precise indication of their position in the event of Roumania becoming the victim of German aggression. He enquired whether it would make it easier for His Majesty's Government to do this if Poland and Roumania agreed to make treaty provisions between them clearly applicable as against German aggression, and if the Balkan Entente proclaimed their joint determination to guarantee each other's frontiers.

4. Lord Halifax informed the Minister that he would report what he had said urgently to the Prime Minister and to his colleagues, but that he anticipated that an essential element in their judgment would be the knowledge of what would be the attitude of the Governments of Poland, Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia.

5. His Majesty's Government have now instructed His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw, Angora, Athens and Belgrade to endeavour to obtain from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs in those capitals an immediate expression of opinion of what would, in fact, be the views of their respective

Governments in the circumstances foreshadowed. His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow has also been instructed to enquire immediately of the Soviet Government whether they can give any indication that they would, if requested by the Roumanian Government, actively help the latter to resist German aggression.

6. His Majesty's Embassy is instructed to explain, for the information of the Government of the Republic, that His Majesty's Government are endeavouring to elicit the views of the above Governments in order to assist them in coming to a decision as to their own attitude. Before taking any decision they will wish to concert with the Government of the Republic a common line of policy. His Majesty's Government do not ask the Government of the Republic to take any parallel action, but they will, of course, be grateful for their views.

7. His Majesty's Embassy is instructed to urge most particularly that the above information should be treated as absolutely confidential.

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 451

Note from the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs to His Majesty's Embassy, Paris

PARIS, le 20 mars 1939

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l'honneur d'accuser réception de la note du 18 de ce mois par laquelle l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté britannique a porté à sa connaissance la démarche faite le 17 mars par le Ministre de Roumanie à Londres auprès de Lord Halifax concernant les exigences formulées par le Gouvernement allemand auprès du Gouvernement roumain.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères remercie l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté britannique de ces informations qui concordent avec celles qui ont été recueillies par le Ministre de France à Bucarest et qu'une récente démarche de l'Ambassadeur de Roumanie a confirmées.

Il résulte de l'ensemble de ces indications que le Gouvernement roumain se trouve actuellement soumis par le Gouvernement du Reich à des exigences d'ordre économique dont il y a lieu de craindre qu'elles ne soient prochainement appuyées par une pression politique et militaire destinée à assurer en fait au Reich le contrôle total, tant politique qu'économique, de la Roumanie.

Le Gouvernement français partage entièrement l'avis du Gouvernement britannique sur la nécessité d'arrêter en de telles circonstances une attitude commune des deux pays. Il considère que, fût-elle pour le moment orientée seulement vers l'est, la nouvelle entreprise allemande n'entraînerait pas moins, en cas de succès, l'hégémonie du Reich en Europe avec tout ce qu'une telle éventualité comporterait de menaces pour la sécurité et les intérêts vitaux de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne.

Le Gouvernement français, comme le Gouvernement britannique, a demandé à ses représentants en Pologne, en Yougoslavie et en U.R.S.S., de s'informer de l'attitude adoptée par les Gouvernements de ces différents pays.

Il considère, comme le Gouvernement britannique, que la réponse de ces Gouvernements constituera un élément d'appréciation important.

Il pense que la Roumanie représente à l'heure actuelle le dernier obstacle au triomphe de l'impérialisme allemand et de la mainmise du Reich sur les ressources de l'Europe centrale et orientale. En présence de ce danger commun, le Gouvernement français se déclare prêt à donner assistance à la Roumanie au cas où celle-ci serait l'objet d'une agression allemande.

Mais cette assistance ne sera pleinement efficace que dans la mesure où les Gouvernements français et anglais seront pleinement d'accord pour opposer à l'agression une résistance commune. Le Gouvernement français est donc prêt à collaborer avec le Gouvernement britannique à tout examen d'une action concertée des deux Gouvernements.

No. 452

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 93 [N 1598/233/38]

MOSCOW, March 20, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 42¹ of the 1st February, I have the honour to report that the Eighteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist party opened in Moscow on the 10th March.

2. The proceedings on the first day of the Congress began with a short introductory speech of no particular interest by M. Molotov, in which he rapidly reviewed the achievements of the past five years. The Congress then approved unanimously the composition of the Presidium, Secretariat, Editing Commission and Mandates Commission, as submitted to them. Lists giving the members of these bodies are enclosed herein.¹ Having unanimously voted the order of the day recorded in my despatch under reference, the Congress, after a display of enthusiasm graphically described in the Soviet press, next settled down to hear M. Stalin's report on behalf of the Central Committee.

3. M. Stalin, the translation of whose speech extracted from the 'Moscow News' is also enclosed,² first invited the attention of his hearers to the international situation. He said that, while the years which had elapsed since the last congress was held in 1934 had for the Soviet Union been years of prosperity and development, this period had for the capitalist countries been one of great political and economic stress. On top of a world economic crisis, the second imperialist war, involving 500 million men, was now ranging from Shanghai to Gibraltar. The three aggressor Powers had joined forces and the question of a fresh division of the world by violent means had been raised. The second imperialist war was being waged by the aggressor States against

¹ Not printed.

² Not printed in full; see note 3, p. 413, for an extract from the speech. Sir W. Seeds telegraphed a short summary of M. Stalin's speech on March 11.

the interests of Great Britain, France and the United States, who, for their part, invariably gave way before the aggressors.

4. It was surprising that the democracies, although both economically and militarily they were undoubtedly stronger than the Fascist States, should show such weakness. One reason for this was that the bourgeois Governments feared that a revolutionary movement might result from another World War. The principal reason, however, was the failure of France and Great Britain to pursue a policy of collective security and collective resistance to the aggressors. Their so-called policy of 'non-intervention' amounted to encouragement of aggression. It implied a desire to see Japan and Germany involve themselves in a war with the Soviet Union. After allowing both sides to wear themselves out, the democracies would then be able to step in and dictate their own terms 'in the interests of peace'. After making repeated concessions in the Far East and in Central Europe, the democracies had laid the blame for the resulting disasters on the alleged weakness of the Soviet Union, and had thus encouraged the Germans to go eastwards. A typical instance was the way in which the Anglo-French and American press had played up the idea of a German attack on the Ukraine, the purpose of this manoeuvre being to make bad blood between Germany and the Soviet Union and provoke a conflict for no real reason. It was possible that there were in Germany men sufficiently insane to dream of uniting the Soviet-Ukrainian elephant to the Carpatho-Ukrainian grasshopper, but it would, if necessary, be possible to find in the Soviet Union a sufficient number of strait-jackets for such lunatics. The Germans, however, had disappointed democratic expectations by turning westwards instead of eastwards and demanding colonies.

5. France and Great Britain had themselves shown their lack of faith in the Munich system of appeasement by increasing their armaments. It was comprehensible that the Soviet Union should also react to so threatening a situation. The Red army and fleet had been strengthened, and other measures had been taken in that the Soviet Union had in 1934 entered the League of Nations, believing that, despite its weakness, it might serve as a tribune for unmasking the aggressors and as an instrument of peace which might check the outbreak of war. The Soviet Union had also concluded pacts with France, Czecho-Slovakia, Outer Mongolia and China.

6. Soviet foreign policy was based on four principles: First, the Soviet Union stood for peace and the consolidation of good practical relations with all countries in so far as such countries were willing to cultivate similar relations with the Soviet Union and did not seek to violate Soviet interests. Secondly, it stood for peaceful, close and neighbourly relations with all countries with which it had a common frontier, provided that those countries were animated by the same desire and did not seek directly or indirectly to injure the integrity or inviolability of the Soviet frontiers. Thirdly, it would support all peoples who had been the victims of aggression and who were fighting for their national independence. Finally, the Soviet Union did not fear the threats of the aggressors, but would, in defence of the Soviet frontiers, return two blows for every one which it received.

7. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union was based on its economic and political might and growing culture; on its moral and political unity; on the friendship which united the peoples of the Soviet Union; on its army and navy; on its policy of peace; on the moral support of the workers of the world, who have a vital interest in the maintenance of peace; and on the goodwill of all countries for which one reason or another were not interested in disturbing the peace. The foreign political tasks of the Communist party were to preserve the peace and consolidate good practical relations with all countries; to be cautious and to avoid being involved in conflicts by those promoters of war who were accustomed to get others to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them; to strengthen by all means the Red army and fleet, and to consolidate the bonds of friendship with the workers of all lands who had an interest in maintaining peace and friendship between peoples.³

8. Turning next to the internal situation, M. Stalin said that the Soviet Union, during the period under consideration, had made great progress in the economic, cultural and political field. Industry and agriculture had been

³ The text of M. Stalin's speech, as printed in the 'Moscow News', read as follows at this point:

'The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is clear and explicit:

'1. We stand for peace and the strengthening of business relations with all countries. That is our position; and we shall adhere to this position as long as these countries maintain like relations with the Soviet Union, and as long as they make no attempt to trespass on the interests of our country.

'2. We stand for peaceful, close and friendly relations with all the neighbouring countries which have common frontiers with the USSR. That is our position; and we shall adhere to this position as long as these countries maintain like relations with the Soviet Union, and as long as they make no attempt to trespass, directly or indirectly, on the integrity and inviolability of the frontiers of the Soviet State.

'3. We stand for the support of nations which are the victims of aggression and are fighting for the independence of their country.

'4. We are not afraid of the threats of aggressors and are ready to deal a double blow for every blow delivered by instigators of war who attempt to violate the Soviet borders.

'Such is the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. (Stormy and prolonged applause).

In its foreign policy the Soviet Union relies upon:

1. Its growing economic, political and cultural might;
2. The moral and political unity of our Soviet society;
3. The mutual friendship of the nations of our country;
4. Its Red Army and Red Navy;
5. Its policy of peace;
6. The moral support of the working people of all countries, who are vitally concerned in the preservation of peace;
7. The good sense of the countries which for one reason or another have no interest in the violation of peace.

The tasks of the Party in the sphere of foreign policy are:

1. To continue the policy of peace and of strengthening business relations with all countries;
2. To be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts of warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them;
3. To strengthen the might of our Red Army and Red Navy to the utmost;
4. To strengthen the international bonds of friendship with the working people of all countries, who are interested in peace and friendship among nations.'

completely reconstructed and modernised from a technical point of view. The last remains of the capitalist classes had been finally wiped out, workers, peasants and intelligentsia united in a single labour front, the moral and political unity of the country strengthened, and the highest degree of democracy achieved on the basis of the new constitution. Thanks to this, the rulers of this country had succeeded in consolidating their power to an extent which might well be the envy of any Government in the world.

9. With regard to the development of industry, M. Stalin quoted figures showing what had been done in this respect, and reached the conclusion that, while the Soviet Union had overtaken the most important capitalist countries so far as technical progress and speed of development was concerned, Soviet industry had still not caught up with those countries in regard to the proportions of industrial output per head of the population. The capitalist countries must be overtaken in this respect, too, but time would be required, and two or three years would certainly not suffice. It was a mistake to let one's fancy run away with one, as certain officials of the State Planning Commission had done.

10. With regard to agriculture, M. Stalin, who again illustrated his assertions with statistics, declared that Socialist agriculture was now the only form of agriculture in this country and that Soviet agriculture was more productive and more up to date than that of any other country.

11. M. Stalin next discussed the improvement in the material welfare and cultural development of the population. After quoting figures to show that the national income and workers' wages had increased considerably during the last five years, he furnished statistics to demonstrate the progress made in the realm of education, which showed that the number of persons receiving education at schools of all kinds had increased from 23,814,000 in 1933 to 33,965,400 in 1938, while in the five years in question no less than 20,000 schools had been built. Finally, the number of young specialists (with the exception of military specialists) who had passed out annually from higher educational establishments had increased from 34,600 in 1933 to 106,700 in 1938.

12. I would add that the purely economic implications of M. Stalin's speech form the subject of a separate despatch.⁴

13. M. Stalin next turned to the increased internal stability of the Soviet régime, and declared that one of the most important achievements of the period under consideration was the further internal consolidation of the country. In contrast with capitalist States there was, in the Soviet Union, no such thing as hostility between classes. Certain writers in the foreign press had said that the elimination of spies, murderers and wreckers, such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yakir, Tukhachevski, Rosengoltz, Bukharin and other degenerates, had shaken the stability of the Soviet régime. To this he would reply that, after Tukhachevski, Yakir and Uborevich had been shot in 1937, the Soviet régime had received a majority of 98.6 per cent. at the elections to the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. and that, after the execution of Rosengoltz, Rykov and Bukharin in 1938, the elections to the Supreme

⁴ Not printed.

Councils of the Allied Republics had resulted in a majority of 99·4 per cent. Did this look like disintegration? Had not, moreover, the events of Lake Khasan shown that the elimination of spies and wreckers had proved the best method of strengthening Soviet institutions?

14. Summing up this portion of his speech, M. Stalin declared that the tasks of the party in the field of internal policy were as follows: (1) To develop industry and production, so that it would be possible to overtake economically the principal capitalist countries in the course of the next ten or fifteen years; (2) to develop agriculture and stock-breeding; (3) to continue the improvement in the material welfare and cultural development of the population; (4) to put into practice the Socialist Constitution; to carry through to its conclusion the democratisation of the political life of the country; to strengthen the moral and political unity of the population and to further the development of Soviet patriotism; (5) not to forget the capitalist encirclement, but to remember that foreign espionage organisations would continue to send spies, murderers and wreckers into the Soviet Union; and, finally, to strengthen accordingly the Soviet Socialist intelligence service.

15. M. Stalin next turned to the further strengthening of the All-Union Communist Party which had been achieved during the period under discussion. The past five years, he said, had been a period during which the party line had triumphed completely. All the adversaries of the party line, the remains of the old Left and Right oppositions and the Trotski-Pyatakof and Bukharin-Rykov degenerates, had been unmasked and wiped out. After the elimination of these enemies of the people the party had become more than ever united round its Central Committee.

16. M. Stalin next discussed the means by which this consolidation had been achieved, and dwelt on the necessity for the careful selection of party leaders and for a close connexion between the higher party organisations and the practical work of the party. He said that 1,874,488 party members had been represented at the seventeenth party congress, which showed an increase of 600,000 members since the sixteenth party congress. Such an increase in the circumstances prevailing from 1930 to 1933 could not be healthy. The 'purge' of the party which had been begun in 1933 had accordingly been continued until May 1935, while the admission of new members to the party was stopped until the autumn of 1936. Many mistakes had admittedly been made in the course of this 'purge', and there was no doubt that recourse should no longer be had to mass 'purgings' of the party; but the 'purge' which took place from 1933 to 1936 had been inevitable and had in principle given positive results. At the Eighteenth Congress some 1,600,000 members of the party were represented, *i.e.*, 270,000 less than at the Seventeenth Congress; but if there had been a falling off in quantity, this had been more than compensated by the gain in quality. This was a great achievement.

17. Continuing, M. Stalin emphasised the necessity for well chosen *cadres*, who would follow the correct political line. It was further desirable that they should be composed of young men, and indeed that the responsible positions in the party should be held by young men.

18. M. Stalin then went on to stress the importance of propaganda in the party and of the education of party members along Marxist-Leninist lines, which, he maintained, was an essential condition of satisfactory work. After referring to the recently published 'Short History of the Party' and the decree issued by the Central Committee in connexion with it, M. Stalin enumerated a number of measures decided upon by the Central Committee for the improvement of this side of the party's work. In particular, he mentioned their decision to concentrate all propaganda organisations under a central propaganda administration, to substitute individual self-instruction and propaganda by means of the press and of lectures for the system of debating circles, which had existed hitherto, and, finally, to organise a number of new schools and courses of lectures in Marxism and Leninism.

19. M. Stalin next discussed what he termed two questions of theory. The first of these concerned the State as a whole. It had been suggested, he said, that the stage had been reached when, according to the teaching of Marx and Engels, the cumbrous machinery of State might be abolished. His answer to this was that so long as the capitalist encirclement existed, and until socialism was victorious in the whole world, it would not be possible to take this step. Engels had contemplated the triumph of socialism throughout the world and not in a single State, and in any case he could not be expected to foresee what would happen fifty years after his time. Moreover, though it had been necessary to wipe out the machinery of the bourgeois State, there was no reason why the new proletarian States should not retain certain functions of the old State.

20. The second question concerned the Soviet intelligentsia. In spite of the clearly defined party line in this matter, there were still certain members of the party who adopted an attitude of hostility towards the Soviet intelligentsia. It was essential that they should understand that the new Soviet intelligentsia was completely different, both in its origins and in its functions, from the old intelligentsia which had been the tool of the capitalist classes.

21. Summing up, M. Stalin declared that, in order to strengthen the party still further, it was necessary (1) systematically to improve the composition of the party by only admitting carefully chosen men; (2) to bring the higher party officials into closer contact with the every-day work of the party in order that their leadership should become less bureaucratic; (3) to centralise the work of selecting *cadres*; and (4) to centralise propaganda.

22. From the accounts published in the press it appears that almost every sentence of M. Stalin's speech was greeted with wildly enthusiastic applause, and that at the end of it he received a tremendous ovation 'in all the languages of the nations of the U.S.S.R.'

23. M. Stalin's speech, though it possessed the authority, and consequently the interest, which must needs attach to the utterances of the absolute ruler of a great Power, contained little that was new or unexpected. Indeed, it may be said that it has served above all to confirm and to consecrate the principal tendencies which have of late become noticeable to observers of Soviet affairs.

24. As far as foreign policy is concerned, M. Stalin's remarks give official confirmation to the line taken of late by the Soviet press. His condemnation of the 'so-called democracies', and above all of His Majesty's Government, is, on the whole, more violent than his criticism of the 'Fascist aggressors', for whose tactics he seems to nourish a certain admiration. The ultimate aim of His Majesty's Government and the French Government is represented by him as being to encourage Germany to move eastwards against the Soviet Union. They are even accused of endeavouring (unsuccessfully) to poison Soviet-German relations in order to achieve this end. In short, French, and, to a still greater extent, British policy, is shown as being grasping, treacherous and ineffective and directly hostile to Soviet aims and interests. From the Soviet point of view, it would seem, there is no longer anything to choose between the two hostile *blocs*, between whom the 'Second Imperialist War' is, to all intents and purposes, already in progress, and the chief care of the rulers of this country must be to prevent it from being drawn into a conflict which does not concern it.

25. With regard to internal affairs, M. Stalin authoritatively re-stated three or four principles, for which the way has already been prepared for some time past in the press or elsewhere.

26. While showing abundant optimism with regard to the economic, cultural and social progress made by this country, he gave his listeners a clear warning against the 'gigantomania' which has long been a failing of Soviet planning. Furthermore, his statement that it would take ten to fifteen years for the Soviet Union to catch up economically with the principal capitalist States must have had a damping effect on the ardour of some of his listeners, not excluding M. Molotov, who in his project of the Third Five-Year Plan had declared that this would be achieved by 1943. In discussing the stability of the régime, M. Stalin touched briefly on the subject of the 'purge' and, with a frankness not far removed from cynicism, quoted the overwhelming majorities obtained at the elections of 1937 and 1938 as a proof of the efficacy of such methods. We thus have, from the lips of M. Stalin himself, confirmation of the theory advanced in my despatch No. 81⁵ of the 6th March, that a reign of terror is, at any rate from the point of view of the ruler, the most satisfactory, if not the only satisfactory, method of ruling this country. But, while M. Stalin thus justified the 'purge' by its alleged results and emphasised the need for watchfulness where the capitalist encirclement was concerned, it cannot be said that any part of his speech seemed to herald a fresh wave of arrests and executions, or was calculated to bring the spy-mania which pervades this country back to its old pitch.

27. Of the two 'questions of theory' discussed by M. Stalin, the first, concerning the theory of the Socialist State, merely provided an opportunity to enunciate afresh the views which he has set out on previous occasions. The theory of the 'new intelligentsia', on the other hand, to which Mr. Vereker has already had occasion to refer in his despatch No. 1⁵ of the 2nd January last, is of more recent origin and, in my opinion, of no little interest. In a

⁵ Not printed.

speech on which I am reporting separately⁶, M. Molotov quoted figures fully illustrating the composition of the new Soviet intelligentsia. It was, he said, composed as follows:—

Composition of Soviet Intelligentsia

(1) Directors of industrial and agricultural enterprises	1,751,000
(2) Engineers and architects	250,000
(3) Subordinate technical employees (e.g., station-masters)	810,000
(4) Agronomists	80,000
(5) Other agro-technical experts	96,000
(6) Scientific workers (professors, &c.)	80,000
(7) School teachers	969,000
(8) Cultural workers (journalists, librarians, &c.)	297,000
(9) Art workers	159,000
(10) Doctors	132,000
(11) Subordinate medical staff (midwives, nurses, &c.)	382,000
(12) Economists and statistical workers	822,000
(13) Bookkeepers and accountants	1,617,000
(14) Legal workers (judges, public prosecutors, &c.)	46,000
(15) Students of higher educational establishments	550,000
(16) Other groups of the intelligentsia (including the military intelligentsia)	1,550,000
Total	9,591,000

From the foregoing table it will be seen that the body of citizens, constituting between 5 and 10 per cent. of the population, for which M. Stalin is so anxious to secure proper treatment and create a specially favoured position, corresponds not to what is normally understood by 'intelligentsia', but rather to what, in a capitalist community, would be described as the bourgeoisie or upper and middle classes. In short, twenty years after the revolution, the existence of a new bourgeoisie has been officially consecrated.

28. One of the qualities required of all good party and non-party Bolsheviks is a 'feeling for signals' ('chutkost k signalman'); and it is perhaps worth attempting, with them, to discern which way the signals are pointing in M. Stalin's speech. In so far as it is possible to generalise, the dominating impression seems to be one of comparative moderation and, above all, realism.

29. From the point of view of internal affairs the speech seems to point to a desire for consolidation. Though the results achieved by the recent terror are to be maintained, there is to be no intensification of it. Hitherto, though relays of privileged individuals had succeeded each other, the 'purge' had not permitted of the formation of a privileged class. Now, the establishment of such a class, which will owe everything to M. Stalin and, he no doubt hopes, prove his principal support, is formally approved.

⁶ Not printed.

30. Similarly, in matters of foreign policy, account is taken of the realities of the situation and, above all, of the fact that, in the present state of the Red army, of the Soviet economic system and of Soviet transport, the Soviet Union should avoid intervention in a conflict of capitalistic Powers. Thus, while M. Stalin and various other speakers at the Congress emphasise Soviet readiness to defend the frontiers of the Soviet Union, should they be attacked, the line taken by all of them is that the chief care of those responsible for Soviet foreign policy must be to prevent the Soviet Union from being dragged into the struggle now in progress between the Fascist States and the so-called democracies. M. Stalin did, of course, say that the Soviet Union would be prepared to support all peoples who had been the victims of aggression and who were fighting for their national independence. This, however, may merely imply that the Soviet Government would be prepared, as in the case of China and Republican Spain, to provide assistance in the form of war material, provisions and technical help, after aggression was in full swing. Those innocents at home who believe that Soviet Russia is only awaiting an invitation to join the Western democracies should be advised to ponder M. Stalin's advice to his party:—

'To be cautious and not allow Soviet Russia to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire.'

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

No. 453

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 56 A Telegraphic [C 3620/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 21, 1939, 12.15 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Just before I left for audience I was given paper which purports to be summary of German draft trade agreement. Acceptance of these proposals would give Germany large measure of control over all branches of Roumanian economy.

2. I therefore without revealing possession of summary urged that having regard to constitution of British trade mission² it would be reasonable that I should be given detailed information of German proposals. King hesitated and said that perhaps this could be done privately. Further telegram³ on this subject will follow as soon as I know whether I can use summary here.

¹ No. 443.

² The intention of His Majesty's Government to send a trade mission to Roumania was announced on March 20.

³ It was noted on the file copy of this telegram that the further telegram was that printed below as No. 468, but that it did not explain the origin of the paper referred to in paragraph 1.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)**No. 135 Telegraphic [C 3598/335/618]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 21, 1939, 10.0 a.m.

1. Please inform State Department of the following for confidential information of the President.
2. Roumanian Minister told me on March 17¹ that he understood Roumanian Government had been asked by German Government to agree to give latter monopoly of Roumanian exports and to accept measures of industrial restriction inside Roumania in German interests. On this basis Germany would guarantee Roumanian frontiers.
3. Roumanian Government, he said, were disposed to regard this as in nature of ultimatum though I understood that on their refusal to accept these terms further terms had been suggested.
4. Roumanian Minister, emphasizing extreme urgency, proceeded to ask whether His Majesty's Government would be able to give precise indication of their position in the event of Roumania becoming victim of German aggression. He enquired whether it would make it easier for His Majesty's Government to do this if Poland and Roumania agreed to make treaty provision between them clearly applicable as against German aggression and if Balkan Entente proclaimed their joint determination to guarantee each other's frontiers.
5. I told the Minister that I should report what he had said urgently to the Prime Minister and my colleagues, but that I anticipated an essential element in their judgment would be the knowledge, if it could be supplied, of what in fact would be attitude of the Polish, Turkish, Greek and Yugoslav Governments in circumstances foreshadowed.
6. His Majesty's Representatives in these four countries were then instructed² urgently to sound the Governments to which they are accredited. His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow was also instructed³ to inform the Soviet Government of the Roumanian *démarche* and enquire whether they could give any indication that they would, if requested by Roumanian Government, actively help the latter to resist German aggression. His Majesty's Government also consulted the French Government with a view to concerting policy.
7. Subsequent information has cast doubt on the accuracy of the account given by the Roumanian Minister of what had passed between the German and Roumanian Governments. Nonetheless, His Majesty's Government have thought it essential, in view of the situation resulting from German action in Czecho-Slovakia, to pursue their enquiries in the capitals chiefly concerned. They have therefore instructed His Majesty's Representatives at Paris, Moscow and Warsaw as shown in my immediately succeeding telegram.⁴

¹ See No. 395.² See No. 390.³ See No. 389.⁴ Not printed. This telegram repeated the text of No. 446.

No. 455

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) (Received March 21, 10.30 a.m.)

No. 156 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1505/30/59]

BERLIN, March 21, 1939

My telegram No. 155.¹

It is most important that information contained in my above-mentioned telegram should be regarded as most secret and confidential as any leakage would certainly be visited not only upon informant, but may also have very serious consequences for Lithuanian Government.

¹ No. 441.

No. 456

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 4¹ Telegraphic [N 1515/30/59]

KOVNO, March 21, 1939, 3.20 p.m.

Addressed to (? Riga)² telegram No. 4 March 21.

Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs returns to Kovno today.

2. Before leaving Berlin he telephoned his Government that situation was 'very serious'.

Repeated to Foreign Office and Berlin.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 4 and was repeated as No. 12 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 21 at 3.50 p.m.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 457

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21, 4.15 p.m.)

No. 58 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [C 3678/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 21, 1939, 4.15 p.m.

Following is summary of statement which Roumanian First Secretary who left last night will hand you on arrival.

Roumania will resist violation of her frontier.

Attack on Roumania is not certain but possible and German concentrations in Slovakia and Hungarian concentration on Roumanian frontier arouses anxiety. Roumania is anxious to avoid anything suggestive of provocation to Germany and therefore deprecates the conclusion of pact of mutual assistance.

On the other hand Roumania believes, in her own interests and also of that of peace, Western Powers should state in precise terms that they will not allow any further changes of the frontier[s] and will support any State that defends its independence with all the military forces at their disposal. In order that its power of resistance may be as great as possible, Roumania must

be able to count on ample assistance in obtaining armament programme more especially as arms contracts in Czecho-Slovakia may be cancelled.

No. 458

Record of Conversations between British and French Ministers in London¹

[C 3986/19/18]

I

Record of an Anglo-French Conversation held in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office, on March 21, 1939, at 5 p.m.

Present:

Lord Halifax.

Mr. Strang (Foreign Office).

M. Georges Bonnet.

M. Bressy (Private Secretary to M. Bonnet).

European Situation

Lord Halifax first gave M. Bonnet an account of recent developments in German-Roumanian relations, as reported by the Roumanian Minister in London, and as subsequently modified by enquiries in Bucharest.

M. Bonnet said that the French Government had had similar information.

He then went on to give an account of various recent conversations he had had with diplomatic representatives in Paris.

In discussing the situation with the Roumanian Ambassador in Paris, the question of Russia had been touched on. The Roumanian Ambassador explained that Russia was not popular in Roumania, particularly among the upper classes, some of whom preferred Herr Hitler to Stalin. To this, M. Bonnet had replied that the help that Russia might provide, if only in war material, was not negligible. In the case of Czecho-Slovakia, he had been sceptical as to the effectiveness of Russian support, since Russia was remote from the sphere of action and had no common frontier with Czecho-Slovakia. But there was a common frontier between Russia and Roumania. In the end, the Roumanian Ambassador had raised no objection to an approach being made by the French Government to Moscow, but he begged that the French Government would not involve the Roumanian Government. This interview had taken place on the 18th March.

On the same day M. Bonnet had seen the Soviet Ambassador, and having told him that France was prepared to help Roumania, even though she had no obligation to do so, had asked what would be the attitude of Russia. He had not subordinated the assistance of France to that of other countries. The

¹ M. Bonnet accompanied the President of the French Republic on the latter's visit to London. This record, and that printed as No. 484, was made by the British representatives for the use of His Majesty's Government.

Soviet Ambassador had given a reply on the 20th March to the effect that the best course would be to call a conference at Bucharest of the States chiefly concerned (Great Britain, France, Poland, Turkey, Roumania and the Soviet Union) to consider measures for the assistance of Roumania.

To this M. Bonnet had replied that he did not think Roumania would be enthusiastic. The important thing was to find out what each party would give in the way of assistance. Russian help would be most useful if Poland and Roumania both agreed that she should give it. It was important not to frighten these border States, but to proceed with caution. What was wanted at present was not gestures, but action. France had herself begun to employ methods by giving her Government full powers. (At this point M. Bonnet stated to Lord Halifax in confidence that on the previous day the French Government had decided to mobilise one class, and that in virtue of the new powers had forbidden the press to make any reference to this fact.)

M. Bonnet said he had also spoken to the Polish Ambassador on the 19th March. He had said that the French Government were anxious about the German advance and were disposed to do what they could to stem it. They wished to know what assistance Poland was prepared to give. To this the Polish Ambassador had replied that the Polish-Roumanian treaty covered the case of Russia, and not that of Germany. He was authorised by Colonel Beck to inform the French Government:—

- (1) That Poland attached importance to the Franco-Polish alliance and that if France were attacked Poland would fulfil her obligations; but that this alliance was only valid in the case of an attack by Germany upon France;
- (2) That M. Beck would be unable to visit Paris after his visit to London, but hoped that this would not be badly interpreted in Paris since he hoped to go later;
- (3) That the most useful assistance to give to Roumania is not to bring in Russia but to take immediate action at Budapest and Bucharest. Hungary and Roumania had a common interest in stemming the German advance, and French and British diplomacy could act usefully in conjunction with Poland in these two capitals.

To this M. Bonnet had replied that this course hardly seemed to him to be adequate, but he would instruct the French Ministers in Budapest and Bucharest accordingly.

M. Bonnet said that he had now heard from M. Léger that the official Polish reply about Roumania had come in and that it was not satisfactory, being full of reservations. He understood that a copy of it was to be communicated to him in London by the Polish Ambassador here.

M. Bonnet added that he had also done what he could at Washington in regard to the neutrality legislation. The United States Ambassador had seen him on the 18th March, and as he was about to telephone to the President, asked if there was anything M. Bonnet wanted him to say. M. Bonnet told him that the best thing the United States could do would be to modify the

neutrality legislation. The United States Ambassador had seen him again on the 20th March, and had told him that the President was sure of his majority in favour of the modification of that legislation.

Lord Halifax said that he had received the Polish Ambassador that morning² and had told him of the approach that was being made in Paris, Warsaw and Moscow. To illustrate the point of view of His Majesty's Government, he had told the Ambassador that if M. Beck were to say to him: 'You invite us to side with you in the event of German aggression. What have you to say about Danzig?' he would reply that if Poland and Germany were to come to a direct agreement about Danzig, so much the better; but if there should develop out of the Danzig question any threat to the independence of Poland, then, in his opinion, and, he thought, in that of His Majesty's Government, His Majesty's Government would have to treat it as a grave question which was of concern to all.

The way His Majesty's Government saw the situation was not different from the point of view expressed by M. Bonnet. His Majesty's Government thought that it was now a question of checking German aggression, whether against France or Great Britain, or Holland, or Switzerland, or Roumania, or Poland, or Yugoslavia, or whoever it might be. They saw no escape from this. As they had said in their telegram³, they thought the best way to handle this would be to propose that the four Great Powers should join in a declaration to be published in the terms suggested. Their feeling was that if they were to begin by trying to discuss any particular question, this would be likely to take too long. What was vitally necessary was to assert the general position as quickly as possible. This would be a danger signal to German and Italian aggression and at the same time a rallying point for the smaller countries.

(At this point Lord Halifax read to M. Bonnet the text of the proposed declaration—copy annexed.)

Lord Halifax continued that if some general declaration could be quickly secured, the next step would be to approach the Balkan Entente and ask them whether they were prepared to act together in case of aggression by Germany, with the knowledge that if they did so, the Great Powers would act with them.

Lord Halifax added that the Soviet Ambassador had seen him on the previous day⁴ and had proposed a conference at Bucharest. In M. Maisky's opinion the advantages of this proposal were (1) that it would be expeditious, (2) that it would be valuable psychologically both in Berlin and Bucharest. Lord Halifax had replied that he was doubtful about the proposal for a conference, for two reasons, (1) that it would be difficult for His Majesty's Government to send a ministerial representative to Bucharest, (2) that it would be dangerous to hold a conference before being certain of reaching an agreed conclusion. His Majesty's Government thought it essential to move quickly and therefore preferred their own plan.

² See No. 471.

³ See No. 446.

⁴ See No. 433. The interview took place on March 19.

Lord Halifax added that he had seen the Polish Ambassador that morning. Count Raczynski had made the same point as the Polish Ambassador in Paris about the desirability of avoiding a clash between Roumania and Hungary. He had told Count Raczynski that His Majesty's Government had done and would do what they could in this sense. The Ambassador had added, as from himself, that he warmly welcomed His Majesty's Government's proposal, though he was not in a position to say what the view of the Polish Government would be.

Lord Halifax said that he had also seen the Turkish Ambassador that day⁵ and had given him a general idea of the British proposal. The Turkish Ambassador had said that Turkey would in all cases observe her Balkan engagements. Lord Halifax had told him that if the proposed declaration were signed, the next step would be to approach the smaller Powers, and it would be a matter for discussion among the four Powers what the nature of their approach would be.

Lord Halifax had put to the Turkish Ambassador the question whether, if Poland, for example, were attacked, and if France and Great Britain went to her assistance, Turkey would be ready to join them. The Turkish Ambassador's reply had been that if Great Britain were prepared to act with Turkey in the Mediterranean, Turkey would be prepared to go as far as Great Britain in her own geographical area. The Turkish Ambassador had said that he spoke with full knowledge of the mind of the Turkish Government.

Lord Halifax then asked M. Bonnet whether the French Government saw the situation in much the same way as this.

M. Bonnet replied that in general they did. One thing, however, was capital. It was absolutely essential to get Poland in. Russian help would only be effective if Poland were collaborating. If Poland collaborated, Russia could give very great assistance; if not, Russia could give much less. The strongest pressure must therefore be brought to bear upon Poland.

Lord Halifax said that he was entirely of M. Bonnet's opinion. Did not M. Bonnet think that if Great Britain and France took the view that in their own interest it was essential to stop German aggression, wherever it might start, Poland might also be brought to think that it would not be to her interest to see Great Britain and France greatly weakened? If they were greatly weakened, Poland would then be defenceless against Germany.

M. Bonnet said that he agreed, and that that was why he thought Poland would be mad not to join with Great Britain and France.

Reverting to the declaration, he said that it was important to think of the practical aspect. If it were a question of stopping the Germans in Switzerland, the French army had a convenient field of operations. But in the case of Roumania, it was certain that if the Powers most closely interested, namely, Roumania's neighbours, Poland and Russia, did nothing, it would be much more difficult for France to act, for geographical reasons. That was why the

⁵ See No. 472.

action of the border States, and above all of Poland, was of capital importance. The Germans might well use the same arguments as they had done in the case of Czecho-Slovakia. The French army was far removed from the scene of operations. The Franco-Polish Pact would not apply, since it would only come into operation if France herself were attacked. It would, in fact, be insupportable if, Germany having attacked Roumania, and France having attacked Germany in her support, the Poles were to say that their pact with France did not apply, it being remembered that Poland had a greater interest in Roumania's fate than had France, as well as having a treaty with Roumania. It was desirable, therefore, to go to the utmost limit, even to the extent of threats, to bring Poland in.

M. Bonnet then turned to the question of Russia, and stated that the Russians needed watching. They liked to make public declarations for propaganda purposes which did not correspond with their real intentions. It was therefore necessary for each party to say exactly what it was prepared to do.

He recalled that during the Czecho-Slovak crisis in May last he had told M. Litvinov that France would fulfil her obligations, and had asked what the Soviet Union would do. M. Litvinov replied that, in order to reach Germany, Russia had to have a passage through Poland and Roumania, it was therefore for France to arrange matters with those two States. If France could do so, the Soviet Union would fulfil her obligations to Czecho-Slovakia. M. Bonnet said that he had tried to arrange matters with Poland and Roumania, but had failed. When he had seen M. Litvinov at Geneva in September, M. Litvinov's attitude had been that in that event it would be necessary to consult the League Council, and that, if a majority of the Council were secured, the Soviet Union would be able to help by sending aircraft across Roumania (but not across Poland). To this M. Bonnet had replied that by that time Germany would already have succeeded in her aims, and it would be too late.

For this kind of reason M. Bonnet thought that it was necessary for each party to say exactly what it would do—what material it would send; how many guns; how many aircraft; what number of troops. All these questions must be cleared up.

M. Bonnet agreed that the time had come to call a halt to Germany, but the proposed obligation was so vast that it was necessary to know how each country stood. The French army was in a good state, but the French Government did not want to have to bear the burden of the war alone. British help on land would at first be very small. If, in an eastern war, there was no help from Poland or from any other eastern country, France would be in a bad position. It was therefore necessary that the countries most interested should pronounce themselves, and the Poles were certainly interested, since they were directly menaced.

Lord Halifax said that all this was true. There were, he thought, two things to be borne in mind:—

(1) If the situation we feared arose, the primary question would not be:

can we give direct assistance to Poland or Roumania? but: can we conduct a successful war against Germany? Whatever the cause of the war might be, that was the principal question. Could Great Britain and France so damage Germany that they could achieve their purpose of checking her?

Lord Halifax said that he would have thought, though the question required careful consideration, that if France and Great Britain were prepared to take a very firm line, even without the certainty of Polish support at the outset, this very fact would be likely to bring Poland in.

He entirely agreed with M. Bonnet in recognising the capital importance of Poland, and even the need for using very plain language to the Polish Government.

(2) The second point was that it should be remembered that there was small chance of peace in Europe so long as the Nazis remained in power. There was, however, some evidence to show that, if Herr Hitler brought the German people into a major war, this might well be followed by internal consequences in Germany disastrous to the Nazi régime. The same might also be true of Italy.

Lord Halifax said that his conclusion was (though he did not know whether this represented the final attitude of His Majesty's Government) that, even if no assurance of Poland's collaboration could be obtained in advance—and this would, of course, affect Russia's capacity to help—it would still be very difficult for France and Great Britain to take no action if there was a further act of aggression by Germany.

It was worth looking at the possible causes of aggression. If Poland were attacked, Poland would obviously resist. If the attack came in the west, Great Britain and France would be bound to resist, and if the attack was upon France, the Polish Treaty obligations came into play. If the attack went towards the Balkans and the Balkans were solid, then, if Great Britain and France acted firmly, this would probably be the best chance of bringing Poland also into collaboration.

(At 6.45 the conversation was interrupted, and it was agreed to continue it on the following day with the Prime Minister.)

Annex

Draft Declaration

We, the undersigned, duly authorised to that effect, hereby declare that, inasmuch as peace and security in Europe are matters of common interest and concern, and since European peace and security may be affected by any action which constitutes a threat to the political independence of any European State, our respective Governments hereby undertake immediately to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any such action.

No. 459

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 7.20 p.m.)

No. 63 Telegraphic [C 3724/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 21, 1939, 6.14 p.m.

Your telegram No. 43.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs was unable to receive me this morning owing to indisposition. I therefore saw Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs at noon and left with him a copy of relevant passages in your telegram. I drew his attention to the fact that besides Russia and France, Poland alone was being approached in the first instance and that no other Power was for the moment being informed of the step that we were taking.

2. As I expected M. Arciszewski's first reaction was fear as to what the effect of a declaration of this kind would have on the attitude of Germany towards Poland. I said that while I well understood this apprehension, it should not be forgotten that Poland was one of the countries most immediately menaced by any further German aggression. He promised that M. Beck would at once consult the other members of the Polish Government concerned and let me have a reply as soon as possible.

3. M. Arciszewski also mentioned difficulty for Poland of military or political co-operation with Soviet Russia. I pointed out the importance for Poland of a friendly Russia as a source of supply of military and other raw material and in case of war for communications in general. He admitted this and said Polish opinion was less hostile to Soviet Russia now than formerly.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Bucharest, Belgrade and Berlin.

¹ No. 446.

No. 460

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 64 Telegraphic [C 3725/71/21]

WARSAW, March 21, 1939, 6.15 p.m.

I asked Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning whether there were any new developments in the situation between Roumania and Hungary. He told me that the Polish Government yesterday instructed their representatives in Budapest and Bucharest to insist that a joint commission should be immediately set up to consider how far demobilisation on both sides could be carried out at once. At present each side was insisting that the other should be demobilised first but Poland was making every effort to secure a settlement. It was of course impossible to have full confidence in the assurances given by Hungary that she had no intention of attacking Roumania but Hungarian Minister had two days ago assured the Polish Government

that the Hungarian Government were prepared to consider seriously how far they could satisfy the reasonable Roumanian aspirations in Ruthenia.

2. Instructions have also been given to Polish representatives in both capitals to collaborate with their British colleagues.

3. When I asked him what he thought the Polish attitude would be in the event of Hungary attacking Roumania he replied that he presumed that relations would be broken off with Hungary, the frontier would be closed and the Polish Government would immediately consult with the Roumanian Government.

Repeated to Bucharest, Budapest and Berlin.

No. 461

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 39 Telegraphic [C 3683/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 21, 1939, 6.53 p.m.

Your telegram No. 34.¹

I saw M. Litvinov this afternoon and gave him paraphrase of paragraphs 1 and 2 of your telegram as well as text of proposed declaration.

2. He said that in view of misleading reports published in the press of all countries (except in Soviet Union) he had been compelled to issue today an official communiqué stating that in reply to our enquiries about his Government's attitude he had suggested a six-Power conference. He understood from the Soviet Ambassador in London that you considered his suggestion premature.

3. I pointed out that the present proposal of His Majesty's Government in no way rendered his suggestion premature: it only proposed earlier step which would be clearer warning to potential aggressors and was easier to decide on owing to the smaller number of Powers concerned at the outset.

4. He answered that agreement on your present proposal would be more easily attained by a conference otherwise each Government concerned would suggest amendments of text and endless telegraphing would ensue. I argued that the substance of the declaration was such that truly peace loving Governments could not fail to subscribe to it and that any amendments would therefore be only slight and speedily settled.

5. M. Litvinov expressed the belief that the Polish Government would not commit themselves to a declaration of the nature proposed.

6. He reverted several times to the fact that his suggestion was regarded as 'premature' and I observed that that word concludes the communiqué to which he alluded and which I have only this moment received.

7. Text of communiqué follows in my immediately succeeding telegram.²

Repeated to Paris and Warsaw.

¹ No. 446.

² No. 462.

No. 462

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 21, 7.20 p.m.)

No. 40 Telegraphic [C 3684/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 21, 1939, 7.10 p.m.

Following is text of Tass communiqué referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹ Begins:—

Foreign press have been spreading rumours to effect that Soviet Government recently proposed to Poland and Roumania its aid in case they became victims of aggression. Tass is authorised to declare that this does not correspond to reality. Neither Poland nor Roumania appealed to Soviet Government for aid or informed Soviet Government of any danger threatening them. It is true that on March 18 British Government having informed Soviet Government that there were serious reasons for fearing an act of violence against Roumania enquired as to possible position of Soviet Government in such an eventuality. Soviet Government in reply to this enquiry made proposal of calling conference of representatives of most interested States, namely Great Britain, France, Poland, Roumania, Turkey and U.S.S.R. Such a conference in opinion of Soviet Government would give best possibility for clarifying real situation and ascertaining position of each of participants. British Government however believed that this proposal was premature. Ends.

¹ No. 461.

No. 463

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 7.15 p.m.)*

No. 67 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1516/30/59]

WARSAW, March 21, 1939

Lithuanian Minister came to see me today in company with Lithuanian Minister at Prague who was in Berlin yesterday and had seen Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs. The latter informed him that the German Government had presented to Lithuania what amounts to an ultimatum. They had demanded the immediate cession of Memelland to the Reich and has threatened that in the event of any resistance or any application for support elsewhere the matter would be no longer dealt with diplomatically but in a military sense.

They had given Lithuania a delay of approximately four days in which to make their decision.

They had further said that if the cession were made, Lithuania proper had nothing to fear and that the Reich had no intention of making any further demands.

I asked Lithuanian Ministers if this information had been conveyed to my

Government either through the Lithuanian Minister in London or His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires in Kovno. They told me this had not been done as Lithuanian Government did not wish to give the impression that they were seeking support elsewhere at the present moment and that this information was being conveyed to me in this way in an unofficial manner merely in order that my Government should be informed indirectly and should decide what attitude they intended to take up.

I pass this information on as it is possible that the Lithuanian Minister in London, though he is informed of the situation, has not made any communication to you and it is also possible that the Chargé d'Affaires in Kovno is not aware of the situation.

The two Ministers asked me for my views, but I hesitated to express any. As they had seen Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs here, owing to illness of M. Beck, I asked them what the reaction of the Polish Government was, but they told me the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs had merely said that he would have to consult his Government.

Repeated to Berlin, Kovno, Riga and Paris.

No. 464

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 21, 9.35 p.m.)

No. 59 Telegraphic [C 3722/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 21, 1939, 7.45 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to make it clear that the Roumanian statement was drawn up before your speech of yesterday.² They deprecate suggestion of general pact of mutual assistance as possibly provocative to Germans and also because opinion in Poland, Yugoslavia and, to some extent, in Roumania would be opposed at any rate for the present to inclusion of Russia.

¹ No. 457.

² For Lord Halifax's speech in the House of Lords on March 20, see Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of L., vol. 112, cols. 308-19.

No. 465

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 66 Telegraphic [C 3726/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 21, 1939, 8.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 63.¹

It is clear that our invitation faces Polish Government and particularly M. Beck with the necessity for a crucial decision.

2. It is the parting of the ways for acceptance would almost certainly

¹ No. 459.

entail immediate and unpleasant German reaction as Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs has pointed out.

3. Their long and practically undefended western frontier, the Corridor and Danzig questions, the German and Ukrainian minorities, their close commercial relations, the new frontier in Moravia and Slovakia, even the common frontier with Hungary all provide opportunities for retaliation.

4. They will be bound to ask themselves (1) whether there is any actual threat to their independence which would justify them in provoking German displeasure, (2) whether other signatories are prepared and in a position to see them through not only eventual war but also period of uneasy peace which might follow such a declaration.

5. I feel sure that a majority in this country would welcome its signature but any knowledge that it had been refused by Poland . . .² might gravely embarrass Government. But it is the Government that has to bear the responsibility and meet the consequences of its decision.

6. Probably M. Beck himself and certainly his lieutenants hope for some safeguard against German . . .². But officials as recently as last night were expressing reluctance to trust in collective guarantees except in case of immediate danger and even then only in military commitments.

7. (? M. Beck)² still professes to believe in the possibility of Hungarian independence of Germany unless a pro-Nazi Government is installed in Budapest. But they are conscious of the danger of Hungary being forced or cajoled into attacking Roumania, and Poland depends on communication with Roumania for oil and other materials.

8. I think Poland would greatly prefer to strengthen or . . .² her existing agreements with France and Roumania and even the U.S.S.R. rather than provoke Germany by signing and *publishing* a new one aimed at her.

Signature of His Majesty's Government would of course carry great and possibly decisive weight with Polish Government. But I feel obliged to draw attention to the real difficulties of Polish Government.

I have little doubt that in present circumstances Poland would fight desperately if her frontiers were crossed by German troops.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 466

Viscount Halifax to Sir M. Lampson (Cairo), Sir W. Selby (Lisbon), and Sir M. Peterson (Bagdad)

No. 213¹ Telegraphic [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 21, 1939, 9.35 p.m.*

My telegram No. 202 (44) (73).²

You should *not* convey to Government to which you are accredited the text of my telegram to Paris No. 94,³ but merely say that we are approaching the

¹ No. 213 to Cairo, No. 46 to Lisbon, No. 78 to Bagdad.

² No. 444.

³ No. 446.

French, Soviet and Polish Governments in regard to the possibility of common consultation with a view to offering joint resistance to any threat to the political independence of any European State.

No. 467

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 62 Telegraphic [C 3693/71/21]

BUCHAREST, March 21, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 61.¹

Under instructions from the King the Minister of Court has just informed me that Hungarian mobilisation is acquiring threatening proportions and Roumanians have almost certain knowledge that 25 German divisions are on the Hungarian frontier. Hungarian aeroplanes have frequently crossed the frontier in one case penetrating as far as Timisoara. In the opinion of Roumanian Government attack might reasonably be expected in the early future and they considered that general mobilisation was essential. This would be done with all possible secrecy in order not to precipitate events and it was hoped to complete it in not more than 10 days. The intention was to mobilise on the frontier 16 divisions 3 mixed brigades and 3 cavalry divisions.

I told the Minister that Polish Ambassador and Minister at Budapest had instructions to urge both Governments to seek a *détente* and I urged that Roumanian Government should emphasise at Budapest Roumanian offer in communiqué to suspend all mobilization.

Roumanian Government claim to have definite information that Bulgarian troops are moving towards Dobrudja.

Similar communication has been made to French Minister but no one else. Repeated to Budapest and Sofia.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir R. Hoare summarized a communiqué announcing the call-up of certain reservists.

No. 468

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 63 Telegraphic [C 3696/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, March 21, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 57.¹

Minister of Court asked me to call this evening; he told me in strict confidence that result of negotiations with Herr Wohltat has been that the Germans have given way on all points regarded by the Roumanians as essential but that Germans are insisting on agreement being kept secret to which Roumania cannot agree.

¹ The reference appears to be to No. 453.

No. 469

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22¹)

No. 122 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3775/3356/18]

PARIS, March 21, 1939

Your telegram No. 94.²

I handed note in the sense of your telegram under reference to Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning. M. Léger has just telephoned to say that he is recommending to the President of the Council that French Government should agree to the proposal of His Majesty's Government and that Minister for Foreign Affairs is to discuss the matter with Your Lordship this afternoon.³

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

² No. 446.

³ See No. 484.

No. 470

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 25)

No. 20 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4053/71/21]

BUDAPEST, March 21, 1939

My telegram No. 46.¹

On March 30 Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs addressed a telegram to German Foreign Minister expressing his gratitude for the friendly attitude shown by the latter towards Hungary's requirements.

Herr von Ribbentrop replied on the same day thanking Count Csaky for his friendly words in connexion with the reunion of ancient Hungarian territories with the Kingdom of Hungary. 'The friendship between our two countries which had been proved in war and in peace would,' he said, 'be maintained in the future as the basis of durable peace and security in Central Europe'.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Bucharest.

¹ No. 305.

No. 471

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 146 [C 3803/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 21, 1939

Sir,

I received the Polish Ambassador this morning at his request and took an opportunity, at the opening of the conversation, to say that the events of the last few days had made Colonel Beck's forthcoming visit even more opportune than before, and that we should be glad to have the opportunity of exchange-

ing views with him. I understood that the arrangements for the visit were taking shape, and I was looking forward to receiving him at the station on his arrival.

2. Count Raczyński explained that he had no instructions to raise any particular matter with me. There was, however, one thing which he thought it proper to tell me. From communications which he had had from Warsaw, he had gained the impression that Colonel Beck was somewhat anxious about the state of relations between Hungary and Roumania, and he knew that the Polish Foreign Minister thought it of the utmost importance to prevent a clash between them. Instructions had been sent to the Polish Ambassador at Bucharest to concert with His Majesty's Minister in exercising influence in the interests of pacification. I told the Ambassador that we would certainly do what we could to help.

3. Count Raczyński said that the question of the Polish-Roumanian alliance had apparently been the subject of conversations between M. Bonnet and the Polish Ambassador in Paris. In reply to a question by M. Bonnet, the Polish Ambassador had replied, on Colonel Beck's instructions, that the Polish-Roumanian alliance, and the military arrangements that accompanied it, applied only to the case of an attack by Russia. Colonel Beck added, however, that he found it difficult to discuss the question of the interpretation of the Polish-Roumanian alliance through Paris, since the Roumanian Government themselves had made no reference to it.

4. Count Raczyński said that his own personal opinion was that Poland's southern flank was so important to her that any attack upon Roumania by Germany would necessarily involve Poland. The Treaty itself, however, only covered the case of Russia, since, at the time of its conclusion, Roumania had been unwilling to assume an obligation against Germany, while Poland had been unwilling to assume an obligation against Hungary.

5. I told the Ambassador that I would put the question to him quite bluntly: was it, then, his personal view that, if Roumania was threatened by Germany, Poland would have to come in? The Ambassador replied that in his view there was a 99 per cent. chance that Poland would come in. I told him that, although we were so much more remote from Roumania than Poland was, we were coming to the same conclusion ourselves.

6. I asked the Ambassador whether there was anything in the Polish-German Declaration of 1934¹ which would preclude Poland from acting against Germany in the event of German aggression against a third party. Count Raczyński replied that the Polish-German arrangement of 1934 had been published in its entirety. His recollection was that Poland had reserved the question of her obligations to other States and (though not in express terms) her obligations as a member of the League of Nations, and the position consequently was that she would be free to operate if a *casus fœderis* arose.

7. I then informed Count Raczyński of the instructions that had just been sent to Your Excellency in my telegram No. 43² of the 20th March, to obtain

¹ This Declaration is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 137, p. 495.

² No. 446.

the views of the Polish Government on the proposal of His Majesty's Government that a declaration should be signed and published in which the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Poland and the Soviet Union should undertake to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any action constituting a threat to the political independence of any European State. I explained that our first intention had been to bring in the members of the Balkan Entente at the very outset, but on thinking the matter over we considered it essential to obtain, first of all, the co-operation of the Great Powers chiefly concerned. If that co-operation could be secured quickly, this would provide a rallying point for the smaller Powers.

8. Count Raczynski said that, personally, he warmly welcomed the proposal though he could not, of course, at this stage speak for the Polish Government. Poland was in a difficult position between her two powerful neighbours and was bound to look at a proposal of this kind from every possible angle. The Polish Government in the past had had doubts about the attitude of Great Britain and France, and were keenly conscious of the danger of being left in isolation. It was clear to him, however, that the attitude of His Majesty's Government and the British people was different from what it had been at the time of the Czecho-Slovak crisis last autumn—as, indeed, he said, I had pointed out in my speech in the House of Lords on the previous day.

9. I said that if we could take this step quickly, we could then begin to discuss various possibilities. So far as Danzig was concerned, for example, our view might be that if Poland and Germany could settle the question by direct negotiations, so much the better; but if the question should develop in such a way as to threaten Polish independence, then I thought that His Majesty's Government would have to treat it as a question which was of the gravest concern to themselves. In the same way it might well be that the Lithuanian Government might be constrained to surrender Memel; but if Lithuanian independence were placed in jeopardy, this was a matter which would affect us all.

10. At this stage I had to cut short the interview in order to fulfil another engagement, but I told the Ambassador that I should be at his disposal any time he wished to pursue the conversation further.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 472

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 115 [C 3694/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 21, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Turkish Ambassador to call upon me this afternoon in order to keep him generally informed of the action which we are taking with a view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression.

2. I explained to His Excellency that there were still two doubtful points

of very great importance, namely, the attitude of the Polish Government and that of the Soviet. We had accordingly addressed an enquiry to Warsaw and to Moscow¹ asking those Governments whether they would be prepared to make any declaration of solidarity with us, and of course the French Government, with a view to discussing possible action.

3. I said that, assuming that we should achieve this, our next step would be to approach other Governments, foremost amongst which would be the Turkish Government, and I should therefore be very glad if M. Aras could give me any idea of the attitude of his Government in these circumstances.

4. M. Aras replied that what he was about to say to me in regard to the position of his Government did not represent a decision taken by them in the light of the happenings of the last few days, but was a fixed policy which they had decided on before he left Turkey, and which he had discussed with the President of the Turkish Republic. The situation was that the Turkish Government were quite satisfied with all their existing treaty arrangements, and quite determined to fulfil all their obligations under them. But before accepting any further commitment, and before departing from neutrality, the Turkish Government would wish to be reassured on two points. The first was, generally, would they have Great Britain with them? And the second was, more particularly, if they were attacked in the Mediterranean, would they have the benefit of direct British assistance? M. Aras explained that, once satisfied on these two points, there was no other question that would present any difficulty, and they would be prepared to go to all lengths with Great Britain. At present, in certain eventualities, they would, under their treaty arrangements, be neutral. If they made any departure from neutrality, the result in the end might be that they would be involved in hostilities up to the hilt. If they were assured of British co-operation they would be prepared to go the whole length. In any event, they would only depart from neutrality if they were on the same side as Great Britain. He added that what he had said was unconditional, and would not be affected by the replies which might be returned by the Polish and Soviet Governments.

5. I asked him whether it was to be understood that Anglo-Turkish co-operation would come into effect even though a war might be begun by a German attack in non-Balkan regions, for example, an attack on Poland or an attack against the West. To this Dr. Aras replied that that was certainly the case: if assured of Anglo-Turkish co-operation, if England went to war Turkey would do the same, though her activity would evidently have to be confined to that particular part of Europe where she could operate.

8. I thanked Dr. Aras and promised to keep him informed as promptly as possible of any developments.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See No. 446.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)**No. 129 [C 3925/7/12]*

PRAGUE, March 21, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform you of an account which I have just received of the events leading up to the declaration of the independence of Slovakia. Hitherto, to me in Prague at any rate, these events have been shrouded in obscurity. The following report, which has been given to me by a reliable friend with excellent sources of information, shows how involuntary was the declaration of independence, and throws a further lurid light on the gangster methods employed by the Reich to obtain its ends in Czecho-Slovakia.

2. On M. Sidor's return to Bratislava, after he had been entrusted with the Government in place of Mgr. Tiso, Herr Bürckel, Herr Seyss-Inquart and five German generals came at about 10 p.m. on the evening of Saturday, the 11th March, into a Cabinet meeting in progress at Bratislava, and told the Slovak Government that they should proclaim the independence of Slovakia. When M. Sidor showed hesitation, Herr Bürckel took him on one side and explained that Herr Hitler had decided to settle the question of Czecho-Slovakia definitely. Slovakia ought, therefore, to proclaim her independence because Herr Hitler would otherwise disinterest himself in her fate. M. Sidor thanked Herr Bürckel for this information, but said that he must discuss the situation with the Government at Prague.

3. Early on the following Sunday morning Mgr. Tiso requested that a meeting of the Cabinet should be held at 8 a.m. M. Sidor agreed, but said that the meeting must not take place in the building ordinarily used because that was guarded by the German 'Ordner'¹ and was also too close to the bridge across the Danube. The Cabinet accordingly met in his private apartment, when M. Sidor proposed that the Government should move to Trnava, since Bratislava was too much under German control. The chief of police, M. Klinovski (who has since been appointed Slovak Minister at Warsaw), thereupon reported that he could not accept responsibility for this move, as the road to Trnava was guarded by the German 'Ordner'. At the same time news was received that an attempt against M. Sidor was in preparation, so the Cabinet went to hold their meeting in the offices of the newspaper 'Slovak'.

4. Mgr. Tiso attended there, and said that he had received a telegram by the hand of Herr Bürckel inviting him to go at once to see the Führer in Berlin. He had to accept this invitation because Herr Bürckel had informed him that otherwise the two German divisions on the other side of the Danube would occupy Bratislava and the Hungarians would be authorised to seize not only Ruthenia, as had already been agreed to by Berlin, but also Eastern

¹ i.e. literally 'stewards', applied to members of the German minority organization, the 'Freiwillige Schutzdienst', who had constituted themselves into a form of auxiliary police. See also No. 450.

Slovakia. Mgr. Tiso explained that he proposed to leave by train early Monday morning and did not, therefore, expect to be back before Tuesday evening. This would have given time for Prague and Warsaw to be consulted, but so soon as Mgr. Tiso arrived in Vienna that day in preparation for an early departure the following morning, he was escorted into an aeroplane and informed that he was to proceed in it to Berlin at once, as Herr Hitler awaited him.

5. While the Cabinet was in session on the following Monday afternoon Mgr. Tiso telephoned to them in German saying that he was speaking in Berlin from the office of the Führer, who was attended also by Herr von Ribbentrop, Baron von Neurath and General Brauchitsch. He had orders to request the Cabinet to summon a meeting of the Slovak Parliament for the following Tuesday morning at 10 a.m. So soon as he was satisfied that his message had been understood he rang off. Mgr. Tiso must have returned by aeroplane during the night, as he arrived back in Bratislava at 4 a.m. on Tuesday morning. He told the Slovak Ministers that he had been received first by Herr von Ribbentrop and then by Herr Hitler. Herr von Ribbentrop had informed him that Herr Hitler was considerably roused because M. Sidor's Government appeared to be co-operating with the Czechs. This was contrary to the intention of the Vienna Award, which had been based on the principle of nationality and therefore of Slovak independence. The Führer, concluded Herr von Ribbentrop, will tell you the rest. Herr Hitler subsequently expressed himself somewhat as follows:—

'At Munich I did not take Bohemia and Moravia into the German territorial sphere ("Lebensraum"). I left the Czechs only another five months, but for the Slovaks I have some sympathy. I approved the Award of Vienna in the conviction that the Slovaks would separate themselves from the Czechs and declare their independence, which would be under German protection. That is why I have refused Hungarian demands in respect of Slovakia. As the Slovaks appear to be agreeing with the Czechs it looks as though they have not respected the spirit of the Vienna Award. This I cannot tolerate. To-morrow at mid-day I shall begin military action against the Czechs, which will be carried out by General Brauchitsch' (who was present and to whom he pointed). 'Germany,' he said, 'does not intend to take Slovakia into her "Lebensraum", and that is why you must either immediately proclaim the independence of Slovakia or I will disinterest myself in her fate. To make your choice I give you until to-morrow mid-day, when the Czechs will be crushed by the German steam-roller.'

Herr Hitler then dismissed Mgr. Tiso, saying that he could arrange any other matters with his staff.

6. While Mgr. Tiso was informing the Slovak Cabinet of these communications at about 8 a.m. on the Tuesday morning, the Deputies began to assemble. Meanwhile, it was found that communication with Prague had been interrupted. At the meeting of the Deputies Mgr. Tiso read the text of

the law proclaiming the independence of Slovakia, which had been given to him by Herr von Ribbentrop already drafted in Slovak. When the Deputies wanted to discuss the matter the leader of the German minority, Herr Karmasin, warned M. Sidor that the German occupation of Moravska-Ostrava would begin that day at noon, and that he should be careful lest Bratislava suffered similar treatment. The Government thereupon left the decision to the Deputies, who protested in dismay and great distress at this treatment, but finally decided that they had no option but to vote in favour of the declaration of independence.

7. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
BASIL NEWTON

No. 474

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 351 [C 3929/19/18]

BERLIN, March 21, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit an account of the sequence of events which led up to the five days' crisis culminating in the total dismemberment of the sovereign State of Czecho-Slovakia by National Socialist Germany.

2. It will be remembered that at the beginning of the year the air was thick with rumours of every description in regard to the intention of Germany to embark on a foreign adventure in some direction, and that, after Herr Hitler's less aggressive speech in the Reichstag on the 30th January and his reference to his belief in 'a long peace,' the atmosphere returned to comparative calm. I say comparative, since, although calm reigned on the surface and there was little evidence of abnormal troop movements or activities, it was always clear that the German military authorities were feverishly working out with the utmost precision plans to meet any emergency in order that they might be ready to carry out the behests of Herr Hitler at the shortest notice, at whatever time or in whatever direction he might command. It will be recollected also that in my despatch No. 139¹ of the 1st February the view was expressed that something was probably afoot and that some action was being planned to take place at a not far-distant date. No definite information could at that time be obtained except that any activity which was in evidence seemed to be centred in Southern Germany, presumably in support of Italian claims against France. Moreover, in his despatch No. 258² of the 28th February, His Majesty's Ambassador reported that, in view of the calm atmosphere prevailing, the moment seemed one rather for stock-taking on the part of Germany than for planning new adventures, and that future German intentions might be governed principally by the state of Franco-Italian relations. As it turned out, the official presentation of definite Italian claims to France

¹ Not printed.

² No. 162.

failed for various reasons to materialise, with the result that a possible Franco-Italian conflict did not exist at that time as an immediate issue. It was in these circumstances possible that Herr Hitler turned his eyes towards Czecho-Slovakia, where he had been baulked of the fruits of a resounding victory in September last.

3. In Herr Hitler's view, Czecho-Slovakia was gradually becoming a centre of infection and German domination in some form or other was always an objective which had to be attained sooner or later, its degree being only dependent on the general international situation and the state of relations existing between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia. The Munich Agreement, it is true, had saved Czecho-Slovakia from being crushed by force, but Herr Hitler could never permit for long that a hostile Bohemia should exist as a permanent menace in the heart of Germany. If the Czecho-Slovaks desired an independent existence, they had to become completely subservient, politically and economically, to Germany. Many Czechs, including, I think, the Czech Minister at Berlin, realised the wisdom of this policy and the Czecho-Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Berlin on several occasions last winter with a view to placing relations with Germany on a more satisfactory basis. Sir Nevile Henderson has learned that in December last a very detailed draft agreement for presentation to the Czecho-Slovak Government was worked out at the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Although Dr. Chvalkovsky did not see the text, he was aware of its general lines, which were, it appears, moderate as compared with those eventually imposed upon Czecho-Slovakia, whilst guaranteeing complete security and satisfaction to Germany. About that time there were alleged to be indications of a revival of the Benes spirit, which, according to German reports, was largely encouraged from America. It was also alleged that the Benes party were being given to understand from that quarter that Munich was not a permanent solution, that there would be a war and that the Czechs would recover not only what they had lost, but even still more. Dr. Chvalkovsky undertook to repress the Benes party, after which the agreement would have been signed. He appears to have failed and thereby lost all value in Herr Hitler's eyes. In the German view the Benes elements had increased rather than diminished in power, with the inevitable effect on Herr Hitler.

4. The first inkling which His Majesty's Embassy had of impending danger for the future of Czecho-Slovakia was from reports received from His Majesty's Consul at Dresden on the 8th and 9th March to the effect that he had been informed by responsible circles at Leipzig that the Slovak claims against the Czech Government in connexion with the constitutional crisis would be encouraged by German elements to the point of civil disturbances, whereupon Germany would send troops to restore order. This information was confirmed by the Military Attaché to this Embassy in conversation with his Czecho-Slovak colleague and communicated to Your Lordship in His Majesty's Ambassador's telegram No. 84³ of the 10th March. Sir Nevile Henderson, at the same time, expressed the view that a German *coup* on

³ No. 197.

Czecho-Slovakia could, in view of Germany's position and her power to foment trouble in that country, by no means be discarded. On the 11th March the German press, which had up to that time devoted little space to the Czecho-Slovak constitutional crisis and Czech excesses, adopted a violently pro-Slovak attitude, with ominous reference to interference with German institutions and individuals, but it seemed clear that a definite lead as to Germany's ultimate intentions was still being awaited from higher authority. With a view to embarrassing the Czech Government and to encouraging Slovaks to be uncompromising in their negotiations with Prague, propaganda had been started in the Slovak language from the Vienna wireless. Unfortunately, the Slovaks, being predisposed to be traitors to their Czech relations, readily responded to this form of propaganda and the Czech Government staged a *coup* at Pressburg, which was occupied by force and resulted in the overthrow of Dr. Tiso's Government. It was then announced that Dr. Tiso had appealed to the German Government.

5. Although on the 10th March it appeared that the situation might lead to serious complications, Sir Nevile Henderson felt that, as no solution of the question would be of any value except with German approval, it would be better to leave the initiative to the German Government. He accordingly refrained from approaching the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the subject, particularly as such action might only have been regarded by the German Government as unnecessary interference and might even have made the position for the Czechs still worse than it already was. He also considered it highly desirable that nothing should be said or published abroad which might excite Herr Hitler to precipitate action. In this view he was supported by his Italian and French colleagues. Sir Nevile Henderson expressed the opinion in his telegram No. 85⁴ that, if Czecho-Slovakia wished to avoid military occupation by Germany, their wisest course would be either to seek arbitration in advance or to withdraw their own troops from Slovakia.

6. On the evening of the 11th March the situation seemed a little clearer and the information gleaned from the Italian and Belgian Ambassadors appeared to show that, although there existed two currents of opinion as to the manner in which the problem should be handled, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were viewing the situation with comparative calm. Sir Nevile Henderson expressed the opinion in his telegram No. 87⁵ that Herr Hitler, who was a master of turning events to suit his purpose, was still waiting on developments. As was ascertained later, it was not until the afternoon of the 12th March that he took his final decision to march into Czecho-Slovakia. The original plan seems to have been an ultimatum to the Czecho-Slovak Government, with a display of force in support. The stories of Czech atrocities, of German loss of life and of streams of refugees from Brünn over the frontier into Austria had, however, produced the required effect. The ultimatum, which, according to the Czecho-Slovak Minister here, had been actually sent to Prague, was cancelled and a decision to employ troops for the domination of Czecho-Slovakia and the establishment of a protectorate were

⁴ No. 203.

⁵ No. 217.

substituted. Field-Marshal Göring was summoned back from San Remo, and the necessary orders were given to the armed forces to prepare for action. By that time it was too late to alter the course of events. From the 13th March onwards German press propaganda similar to that of last summer was unleashed. Every newspaper devoted its issues almost in their entirety to sensational head-lines and accounts of incidents and brutalities in which German nationals were the victims. Insults to the name of the Führer and the German flag and cries for assistance to the mother country by downtrodden Germans appeared in glaring head-lines. The truth no longer appeared to be a matter for serious consideration to the German mind, and all reports were grossly exaggerated and magnified a hundred per cent. Reports of a considerable movement of mechanised troops in the direction of Breslau and Vienna indicated that the German Government were contemplating some form of intervention either by force or by an ultimatum under armed menace. Dr. Tiso visited Berlin and was instructed to summon the Slovak Diet and vote for the complete independence of Slovakia. It was even then not possible to ascertain the exact intentions of the German Government, which were still kept an absolute secret. Sir Nevile Henderson kept in close touch with his French colleague and the advice given to the Czecho-Slovak Minister here was to maintain contact as far as possible with the German Government and give them any reassurance possible in regard to the activities of the so-called Benes clique in Czecho-Slovakia, and at the same time to urge his own Government to refrain from allowing any action to be taken by the Czech authorities against German subjects in Czecho-Slovakia.

7. On the 14th March Sir Nevile Henderson reported in his telegram No. 94⁶ that Herr Hitler had apparently made up his mind to separate Slovakia from Bohemia in order to crush all Benes, Communist and Jewish elements which were regarded as a menace to the security of the Reich. In conversation with His Majesty's Ambassador on the same day the German State Secretary made it clear that Dr. Tiso's Government was the only one legally recognised and that its dismissal was unconstitutional. He emphasised, as was to be expected, the absolute necessity of the eradication of the Benes elements and of the proper treatment of German nationals. Freiherr von Weizsäcker was still, however, unable to inform Sir Nevile Henderson of the intentions of the German Government, although at that time he must have been fully aware of Herr Hitler's decision of the 12th March. Sir Nevile Henderson explained to the State Secretary that, although Czecho-Slovakia was admittedly a problem which primarily and directly affected Germany, His Majesty's Government could not on general principles and having particular regard to the Munich settlement, remain entirely indifferent. He at the same time impressed on the State Secretary the extreme importance of the form in which the situation was handled by Germany.

8. Reports of German troop movements towards the Czecho-Slovak frontier began to pour in, and when it was announced that the Slovak Diet had voted for the complete independence of Slovakia and that the President

⁶ No. 232.

of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, accompanied by his Minister for Foreign Affairs, was due to arrive in Berlin on the evening of the 14th March, it was clear that the position had become critical and that nothing could save the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia. The exact basis of any agreement was still, however, a matter of some speculation, although it was then clear that Bohemia and Moravia would be placed under German protection with some form of military occupation and that Slovakia would be separated from the rest of the country. Up to this moment His Majesty's Government had carefully refrained from any form of intervention which might aggravate the situation, and it was at midnight on the 14th March that His Majesty's Ambassador received instructions⁷ to convey to the German Government the view of His Majesty's Government to the effect that in the interests of the restoration of confidence and relaxation of tension they would deplore any action which might cause a set-back to good understanding and improvement in the economic situation. Sir Nevile Henderson communicated a Note as instructed to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs at the earliest opportunity.

9. Dr. Hacha and Dr. Chvalkovsky reached Berlin on the evening of the 14th March where they were received with full military honours and, indeed, treated with the consideration accorded to a condemned prisoner before execution. Even Dr. Hacha's daughter, who always accompanies her father, received the usual presents of flowers and chocolates. After preliminary conversations between the Czecho-Slovak representatives and Herr von Ribbentrop at the Adlon Hotel, where the former were housed during their stay, the final meeting between Herr Hitler and Dr. Hacha took place in the Reichskanzlei in the early hours of the morning of the 15th March. From all accounts the interview was but a farce. The Czecho-Slovak representatives were presented with a *fait accompli* and were compelled to yield to force. From an eyewitness's account it was a painful spectacle. Herr Hitler refused any discussion and the conversations constituted nothing but an ultimatum under the threat of an aerial bombardment of Prague. The final agreement was signed at 3.55 a.m. on the 15th March, whereby the Czech people, in the interests of final pacification, were handed over to the protection of the German Reich. Having obtained Dr. Hacha's signature, Herr Hitler thus secured the justification for occupation which he required in the eyes of his people. Orders were given by the Government at Prague that the entry of German troops should not be resisted and the German army crossed the Czech frontier a few hours later on their way to the occupation of the capital, although, some hours before the actual agreement was signed, German troops had entered Mährisch-Ostrau in order to forestall any move in that direction by the Poles. Dr. Hacha left Berlin by train on the morning of the 15th March, but owing to delays on the journey it appears that Herr Hitler reached Prague before him where the latter was received by German troops with the honours accorded to the Head of a State. On the following day Slovakia placed herself under the protection of the Reich, whilst in the meantime

⁷ No. 247.

Ruthenia was overrun by Hungarian troops with the presumed acquiescence of the Italian and German Governments. Here ended the drama of the five-day crisis.

10. As Sir Nevile Henderson is in London and will therefore be able to furnish Your Lordship personally with his considered views on the whole tragedy, I shall, in conclusion, only indicate that, according to the Embassy's sources of information, the sudden action of the Czech Government in dismissing the Tiso Government took Herr Hitler by surprise and faced him with a situation for which he had not bargained, at least at the present moment. It is quite clear that Herr Hitler had made up his mind to liquidate Czecho-Slovakia at a later date in such manner as might appear appropriate and that he was vigorously creating a situation in that country to suit his purposes. The speed, however, with which the recent crisis developed at a moment when Field-Marshal Göring was on holiday in the north of Italy, when British Ministers were about to pay a visit to Berlin, and Herr Hitler himself was intending to proceed to Vienna to commemorate the events of last year, are evidence that the German Government themselves were overtaken by the events resulting from their own handiwork. As far as can be ascertained, no special mobilisation measures preceded or took place during the crisis—that had already been seen to in the previous months—and the whole operation was carried out according to plan with complete efficiency by troops at peace strength augmented in certain cases by reservists locally available. Further, German intentions were screened by the large numbers of troops which were already in Vienna to take part in the review which was to be attended by Herr Hitler. This fact and the apparent absence of any specific preparatory military activity which might have been expected to precede the execution of a plan of such magnitude added in no small measure to the difficulty of foreseeing the timing of the *coup* which eventually materialised. My principal colleagues were taken as much by surprise as was His Majesty's Embassy, for indeed as already stated in this despatch, it seems certain that it was not until the afternoon of the 12th March that Herr Hitler decided then and there to carry out his designs on Czecho-Slovakia.

I have, &c.,
GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

No. 475

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 100 [C 3945/19/18]

MOSCOW, March 21, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 9 Saving¹ of the 17th March reporting Soviet press comment on the recent dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith the translation of the

¹ Not printed.

Note addressed by the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs to the German Ambassador in Moscow on March 18 in reply to the Notes of March 16 and March 17 in which Count Schulenburg had, on instructions from his Government, notified the Soviet Government of the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia in the German Empire and the establishment of a German Protectorate over those territories and over Slovakia.

2. It will be observed that the Soviet Government take the opportunity of declaring that they regard as inaccurate and as not in harmony with the facts the official justification of Germany's action set out in the German Note; that, in their opinion, the action of the Czech President in agreeing to the incorporation of certain territories of the former Czecho-Slovak State in the German Empire was unconstitutional; and that Germany's action could therefore only be regarded as a case of arbitrary and violent aggression. In these circumstances, the Note continues, the Soviet Government could not recognise the incorporation of Czechia, or in one form or another the incorporation of Slovakia, in the German Empire as legal or as corresponding to generally accepted international law and justice, or as harmonising with the principle of the self-determination of the peoples. The Note concludes by stating that in the Soviet Government's opinion the actions of the German Government do not eliminate any danger to general peace (as claimed in Herr Hitler's Proclamation) but, on the contrary, have created and increased such danger, violated political stability in Central Europe, increased the elements of anxiety already existing in Europe, and struck a new blow against the feeling of security among peoples.

3. Leading articles in the 'Pravda' and 'Izvestiya' of March 20, commenting on this exchange of notes, support the attitude taken up by the Soviet Government and emphasize the view that Germany's action was illegal. The 'Izvestiya' compares the establishment of the German Protectorate in the occupied territory as similar to the régimes introduced by imperialist conquerors for natives of Africa or Asia in the middle of the nineteenth century, while the 'Pravda' declares that it would indeed be wrong to apply the term of a self-governing colony to the rule which is being instituted in Czecho-Slovakia. Both newspapers remark that the German action is the direct outcome of the 'Munich' policies and 'non-intervention' pursued by the French and British Governments and state that events in Europe are far from having reached their final stage. The 'Pravda' states that the 'Munich peace-makers' had given up collective security in the hope of averting from themselves the advance of fascist aggression and of directing it eastwards against the Soviet Union. They were now reaping the fruits of that policy. According to the 'Izvestiya', however, while the Czecho-Slovak Republic has been destroyed the Czech people still exist and the forces of peace are still in existence and active. In the menacing situation which has arisen in Europe the peoples and wise governments are paying careful attention to the words uttered by the peace-loving and mighty Soviet Union. The 'Pravda' on its part declares that the Soviet Union which occupies the first place as the genuine protagonist of peace and is concerned about the security of large and

small States alike cannot display indifference to acts of fascist aggression which pour oil on the fire of the second imperialist war now raging.

4. I would add that M. Fierlinger, the Czecho-Slovak Minister in Moscow, issued the following statement to the press on March 18:—‘In view of the tragic events in Czecho-Slovakia I have considered it necessary to resign my commission. According to my conviction the occupation of Czecho-Slovak territory by the German army was carried out by means of the coarsest deceit and blackmail against the existing constitutional order and against the genuine will of the Czecho-Slovak people.’ The Legation has, I understand, been taken over by the German Embassy here after the most important archives had previously been destroyed by M. Fierlinger.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty’s Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

ENCLOSURE IN No. 475

Mr. Ambassador,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your Notes of March 16 and 17 notifying the Soviet Government of the incorporation of Czechia in the German Empire and the establishment of a German protectorate over it.

Considering it impossible to maintain silence with regard to the above-mentioned Notes and thus create a false impression of apparent indifference, the Soviet Government deem it necessary to reply in order to express their real attitude towards the above-mentioned events.

1. The politico-historical conceptions mentioned in the introductory portion of the German decree and its explanation and justification and particularly its characterization of the Czecho-Slovak Government as a centre of continuous disturbances and threats to European peace, the alleged inability of the Czecho-Slovak Government to exist and the resulting necessity for the German Empire to assume special responsibilities cannot be considered accurate and in accordance with the facts known throughout the world. Indeed, among all the European states in existence after the first World War the Czecho-Slovak Republic has been one of the few countries where internal calm and peaceful foreign policy were assured.

2. The Soviet Government knows of no State which empowers the head of the Government without the agreement of its people to cancel its independent existence as a State.

It is difficult to admit that any people would voluntarily agree to the extermination of their independence and to the incorporation of their Government into another State. Moreover, this people, who have throughout the centuries fought for independence, have for twenty years enjoyed independent existence. The Czecho-Slovak President, M. Hacha, who signed the Berlin decree on the fifteenth of this month, had no authorization from his people and acted contrary to paragraphs 64 and 65 of the Czecho-Slovak

Constitution¹ and contrary to the will of his people. Consequently, the above-mentioned decree cannot be regarded as having legal force.

The principle of self-determination of peoples, to which the German Government often refers, means the free expression of the people's will, which cannot be replaced by the signature of one or two persons, regardless of their high positions. In the present case no will was ever expressed by the Czech people, even in the form of plebiscites, such as, for instance, those which were held for the determination of the fates of the Upper Silesia and Saar Provinces.

In the absence of any expression of the will of the Czech people, the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia by German troops and the subsequent actions of the German Government cannot fail to be regarded as arbitrary and violent aggression. The foregoing observation applies with equal force to the change in the status of Slovakia.

The actions of the German Government served as a signal for the brutal invasion of Carpathian Russia by Hungarian troops and for the violation of elementary rights of its population.

In view of the foregoing considerations the Soviet Government cannot recognize the incorporation of Czechia into the German Empire or, in one form or another, the incorporation of Slovakia as legal and corresponding to generally accepted international law and justice or in accordance with the principle of self-determination of peoples.

In the Soviet Government's opinion the actions of the German Government not only do not eliminate any danger to the general peace but on the contrary have created and increased such danger, violated the political stability in Central Europe, increased the elements of alarm which already existed in Europe and struck a new blow against the feeling of security among peoples.

I have the honour, &c.

LITVINOV

¹ These articles dealt with the rights and duties of the President of the Republic. In particular it was laid down that while the President negotiated and ratified international treaties, treaties affecting the territories of the State required the consent of Parliament.

No. 476

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 101 [C 3968/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 21, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to Your Lordship's despatch No. 184¹ of the 16th March, I have the honour to state that, in my opinion, too great importance should not be attached to the unofficial intimation conveyed to the Roumanian Minister by the Soviet Ambassador in London to the effect that, if Germany

¹ Not printed. In this despatch Sir W. Seeds was asked to comment on the statements made by M. Tilea referred to in paragraphs 1 and 4 above.

ever tried to make trouble for Roumania through Hungary, the Soviet Union would undoubtedly give any assistance to Roumania that was in its power.

2. In the first place, I would observe that a similar statement was not volunteered by M. Litvinov when, as reported in my telegram No. 35² of the 18th March, I approached him on this very subject. But while M. Maisky's remarks do not correspond with those of M. Litvinov, when approached officially in the matter, it would be a mistake to assume that they were not made under instructions from Moscow; the Soviet reaction to a direct request by Roumania for aid would not be the same as in the case of an enquiry by Great Britain on behalf of the victim of aggression. In the second place, the Soviet Government have good reason for wishing it to be thought that the Soviet Union would be likely to come to the help of Roumania in the event of a German attack on that country. Roumania, it must be remembered, is the last barrier between Germany and the Ukraine, and it is clearly to the interest of the Soviet Union to encourage Roumania to offer such resistance as she can to German penetration and other countries, notably Great Britain, France and Poland, to support Roumanian resistance. The Soviet Government no doubt argue that a statement of the kind made by M. Maisky to M. Tilea may have such an effect, in so far as the hope of assistance from the Soviet Union would make Roumania less likely to give in without a struggle, and would, moreover, be likely to prove an inducement to France and Great Britain to join in the defence of Roumania.

3. What Soviet assistance would amount to in actual fact is another matter and will depend on circumstances. Were it to be clear that a German invasion of Roumania was the immediate prelude of a German invasion of the Soviet Ukraine, it is possible that the Red army might, should such a course be considered strategically advantageous, anticipate an attack on Soviet territory by marching into Roumania to meet the invading German armies. It must, however, be remembered that, in deciding on a line of action in the face of any such threat, the rulers of this country would be bound to take into consideration the very serious damage to Soviet interests of all kinds, as well as the possible danger to the stability of the régime which would result were the Soviet Union to become involved in a war with Germany. In the circumstances and unless the military assistance of other Powers, including Great Britain and France, were assured, the Soviet Union would be greatly tempted not to come to the help of Roumania until the last barrier had been broken down and German troops were massing on the Soviet frontier. If, on the other hand, there were reason to suppose that German pressure on Roumania was the prelude, not to an attack on the Soviet Union, but to a German move westwards against France and Great Britain, it seems certain that the Soviet Union would do everything in their power to keep out of the resulting struggle, and would, indeed, feel considerable satisfaction at the prospect of an international conflict from which all the participants would be likely to emerge considerably weakened, and which would thus furnish the Soviet Union with an opportunity of greatly strengthening its own position.

² No. 403.

4. With regard to M. Tilea's statement that the relations between Roumania and Poland were intimate and would lead to common action being taken against Germany or the Soviet Union, should either Power commit aggression against either Roumania or Poland, I feel that it is not for me to offer detailed observations on a matter which is scarcely within my province. My impression, however, largely based on reports from the posts concerned, is that Poland and Roumania distrust and dislike the Soviet Union no less than they do Germany, and that a Soviet offer of assistance might in certain circumstances be almost as unwelcome to them as a threat of invasion. Whether, too, a Pole can base any confidence on the loyalty and selflessness of a Roumanian, and *vice versa*, is another question which I am not competent to decide. I would only say that M. Litvinov—an expert in such matters—seems to have a very definite opinion.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw, Bucharest and Berlin.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

No. 477

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 22)

No. 154 [C 3766/15/18]

BRUSSELS, March 21, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a despatch from the Military Attaché to this Embassy recording a conversation with the Dutch Military Attaché.

2. It would certainly appear from Colonel Evekink's remarks that the Dutch are now thoroughly alarmed. In fact so far as it is possible to judge from this post their awakening to the danger to their country of the present state of affairs in Europe has come about suddenly. It was only on the evening of March 15 at a dinner at the Dutch Legation that M. Harinxma, the Dutch Minister, said to me: 'Now that the Germans have seized Czechoslovakia, they will turn eastward and we may be left alone for 10 years.' In reply to this astounding remark I said 'I hope you are right, but it sounds a little optimistic'.

3. Owing to the reputed weakness of the Dutch army and the Dutch defences, I feel very doubtful whether the Belgian Staff would be very enthusiastic about Colonel Evekink's suggestion for a common *bloc* between Great Britain, France, Belgium and Holland. In any case the King and his advisers at the Palace are likely to require a good deal of persuasion.

4. In this connection I enclose a copy of an article¹ by Colonel Requette

¹ Not printed.

which was published yesterday in the 'Indépendance Belge' in which he discusses the possibility of a German invasion of Holland and the probable consequences.

I have, &c.,
R. H. CLIVE

ENCLOSURE IN No. 477

No. 4

BRUSSELS, *March 21, 1939*

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the Netherlands Military Attaché, Lt.-Colonel D. van Voorst Evekink, visited me yesterday and told me that he had come to discuss the international situation which was causing him the greatest concern.

He said that, in his opinion, if a halt could not be brought to Germany's ambitions in Europe, the time would come when, satisfied in the East, perhaps even earlier, she would turn her attention to the West, and that this could only mean, amongst other things, a threat to Holland's existence as an independent nation.

I asked him whether, in the event of a German ultimatum to Holland, coupled with the menace of a bombardment of the capital, as in the case of Czecho-Slovakia recently, Holland would fight. He said that she undoubtedly would. He added that every effort was being made to speed up the programme for general mobilisation of the Field Army of 8 divisions and the Light Brigade, that the existing 24 battalions stationed on the frontier would be reinforced by a further 24 battalions within 24 hours and that all approaches from Germany were now provided with explosives already in position, with personnel constantly standing by ready to blow them.

Colonel Evekink then asked me whether, in the event of Germany attacking Holland and Great Britain coming to Holland's aid, British troops would be despatched to Holland. I told him that I had no knowledge of such a plan, and said that, in my opinion, the despatch of troops to Holland direct from the United Kingdom would not be a practical proposition. In any case they would probably arrive too late and, furthermore, that it would be impossible to give any form of assistance without knowing what the Dutch themselves proposed to do and how they intended to operate. I then asked Colonel Evekink whether, in his opinion, the Belgians would remain neutral in the face of a German invasion of Holland. He replied that until recently the Belgians would certainly have maintained their neutrality, though this outlook might now have undergone a change. He said that undoubtedly one of the strongest supporters of the policy of neutrality is Major-General van Overstraeten, who, in his triple role of A.D.C. to the King, the link between the Palace and the Ministry of National Defence and his appointment as Commandant of the École de Guerre, is one of the most powerful influences behind the Throne. But he had reason to believe that even General van Overstraeten was beginning to doubt whether neutrality would pay. I am not at present in a position to confirm or deny this opinion. Colonel Evekink

then came to the main object of his visit. He said that a strict policy of neutrality was in these days the height of folly. Events moved far too quickly and that the only hope of withstanding an attack from Germany was a solid block formed by Great Britain, France, Belgium and Holland. To the outside world, the two small countries would have to maintain their status of neutrality, but that an exchange of military information should be carried on between the several General Staffs *via* the medium of the Military Attachés in the countries concerned. By this means, a valuable step would be taken towards common action in the face of aggression.

I replied that whilst appreciating his point of view, I had no knowledge of how such a proposition would be received in London and that, in any case, the suggestion would have to come from the Dutch. Colonel Evekink said he of course realised this and that, although he was going to Paris for four days, he would see the Dutch Minister of Defence immediately on his return to The Hague and hoped that his proposal would meet with success. I then said that if anything came of his plan, the Dutch would presumably contemplate sending a Military Attaché to London. Colonel Evekink replied that they should of course have sent one long ago, but that owing to the shortage of officers, this was impossible, but he hoped that, in any case, one would soon be found for the appointment.

Before he dined with me yesterday evening, Colonel Evekink said he had spoken to the Netherlands Minister, who, he stated, was in complete agreement with his views. Colonel Evekink then confided to me that he looked to the future with the gravest foreboding. . . .¹ If he represents Dutch military opinion, I would suggest that the Dutch are now thoroughly alarmed and that, in all probability, they will shortly propose an exchange of military information, which idea, a few months ago, would have been quite out of the question.

The concern in Dutch military circles must be very considerable, as it is only of very recent date that Colonel Evekink was threatened with instant dismissal if he made any attempt to re-open conversations with the Belgian General Staff.

I have, &c.,

F. A. A. BLAKE

Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

¹ A personal reference made by Colonel Evekink is here omitted.

No. 478

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 69 Telegraphic [N 1534/30/59]

My telegram No. 67.¹

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 1.51 a.m.

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs tonight what Poland's attitude was. His Excellency was extremely evasive but said he had already given assur-

¹ No. 463.

ances to a (*sic*)² Lithuanian Government that Poland would not attempt to secure any advantage for herself from the crisis. He would not however commit himself to anything further beyond saying that it was essential to have further information from other Lithuanian sources regarding German action, and that he was awaiting further information from the Polish Ambassador in Berlin.

It seems fairly clear that Poland will not take any action if only Memelland is in question.

Minister and his Chef de Cabinet were rather anxious to know what the attitude of His Majesty's Government would be in the event of German pretensions in Lithuania, going beyond Memelland, especially in view of His Majesty's Government's new proposal regarding common declaration. I said that this was surely of more immediate concern to them than it was to His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Riga, Kovno and Berlin.

² This word appears in the file copy of this telegram.

No. 479

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 68 Telegraphic [C 3727/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 1.54 a.m.

My telegram No. 66.¹

1. Minister for Foreign Affairs who was dining with Hudson and me tonight² gave me his first reactions to British proposal. He said that it clearly demanded very serious consideration. His chief preoccupation was the suggested participation of Soviet. Hitherto Poland had kept the balance between Germany and Soviet Russia and had avoided coming down on one side or the other. The proposed declaration would definitely place Poland in the Soviet camp and the reaction in Germany, especially given the Führer's mentality, would undoubtedly be serious. In the circumstances Poland must fully weigh the pros and cons and until he had done so he could not give me a definite answer. His Excellency was especially anxious to know the attitude of the Soviet Government and while I had just received Sir W. Seeds' telegram No. 39³ I felt it best under the circumstances not to communicate it to him. M. Beck implied that the participation of the Soviet Government in any such declaration might lead to difficulties but that Poland might be able to associate herself with England and France if Soviet Russia were omitted.

¹ No. 465.

² This telegram was drafted on March 21.

³ No. 461.

2. His Excellency has promised to give me considered views of his Government shortly but I should be glad to know whether I may communicate to him the purport of any telegrams regarding Soviet attitude I may receive from Moscow.

3. M. Beck added that the fact of his visit to London had already given annoyance in Berlin and that if he were to agree to participate in a declaration signed by the Soviet [? Government], German exasperation would be further accentuated.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 480

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 5 Telegraphic¹ [N 1533/30/59]

KOVNO, March 22, 1939, 4.5 a.m.

Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs received me last evening at 10 p.m. I (*sic* ? and)² made the following statement:

2. German Minister for Foreign Affairs had received Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs at 12 o'clock on March 20, and had informed him that question of cession of Memelland could no longer be postponed. Question could be settled by peaceful or by other means. Under the present conditions disturbances might break out at any time which would necessitate occupation of territory by Reichswehr. Were Reichswehr to enter into territory there was no saying where they would stop. Herr von Ribbentrop had then asked Lithuanian Government to telephone immediately to President Smetona. Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs had said he was leaving for Kovno that day and that there would be ample time before March 25 (the day of meeting of Chamber) for him to convey message to President of the Republic in person. German Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that it could only be question of two or three days and that even during that period he could not guarantee that disturbances at Memel would not break out.

3. Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived at Kovno at 11.15 on March 21. At 12 noon the German Minister informed him that German Government insisted that plenipotentiaries of Lithuanian Government with full authority to sign should be at Berlin on March 22.

4. Lithuanian Cabinet of Ministers after 5 hours deliberation accepted at 7 p.m. advice of Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs to agree to German proposals. At 8 p.m. German Minister was informed preliminarily that proposals would be accepted and that formal acceptance would be forthcoming on March 22 after Kovno Sejm had approved them.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 5 and was repeated as No. 13 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 22 at 11.10 a.m.

² This emendation was suggested in the Foreign Office.

5. Secretary-General made a point of informing me that information he had given French Minister and me was at our own request and that no other member of Corps Diplomatique was being informed. He added that Lithuanian plenipotentiaries would leave on March 22 for Berlin.

6. Later, Latvian Consul-General telephoned from Memel at midnight that Lithuanian troops were evacuating the town; that street fighting was taking place between local Germans and departing Lithuanians and Jews; and that it was believed that German troops would occupy the town today.

Repeated to Foreign Office, Berlin, Warsaw and Paris.

No. 481

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 12.15 p.m.)

No. 163 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3746/19/18]

BERLIN, March 22, 1939

Now that the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia is a *fait accompli* the position here may be summed up as follows:—

Germany is consolidating her position in Bohemia and Moravia. MM. Tuka and Durcansky are reported to have been in Berlin and to have left with new Slovak constitution in their pocket. Italian Ambassador has left for Rome presumably to make personal contact with his Government before Signor Mussolini's forthcoming speech. Apart from the Memel issue there appears to be a slight lull and there is much speculation as to Herr Hitler's future intentions. The fact that Field-Marshal Göring has left again for San Remo so soon after the crisis is not without significance. It is possible that His Majesty's Government's Note¹ of protest will be left unanswered, but it seems more probable that it will evoke a sharp reply either in a written communication or in some speech by Herr Hitler possibly in the Reichstag which it is rumoured may be summoned in the near future. Threats of denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement have been given considerable publicity but it rather looks as though Herr Hitler may now wish to keep this as a card up his sleeve for future use. It hardly seems that denunciation at this stage could be likely to bring the German Government much material advantage. In this connexion Naval Attaché was confidentially informed last night by the Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief that after Mr. Duff Cooper's recent attack in the House of Commons on Herr Hitler² the latter desired to abrogate the Naval Agreement straight away. Although the present position

¹ See No. 308.

² The reference appears to be to a speech by Mr. Duff Cooper on March 16, in which, referring to the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, he said: 'While that thrice-perjured traitor and breaker of oaths is at the head of the German State, I consider any agreement he signs is not worth the paper it is written on.' See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 697-8.

may not yet be clear German Admiralty are optimistic about the maintenance of the Treaty which they themselves desire. (Please communicate this information to the Admiralty as soon as possible.)

The press effusions yesterday were in the strain which was to be expected after the foreign press criticism and speeches in regard to German action. But reports of His Majesty's Government's intentions to set up a democratic front against Germany have been bitterly attacked as a revival of old pre- and post-war policy of encirclement. I feel that the catchword 'encirclement' will have a more damaging effect on public opinion towards Great Britain than the resentment at the daily reports of foreign press attacks on Germany, and is actually making a deep impression on all Germans regardless of class and political opinion. It constitutes the best anti-British propaganda which the German Government could desire. It is for this reason that I venture to send a note of warning as to the signature and publication of any formal declaration as outlined in your telegram No. 74.³ I realise that in the present international situation some policy of this kind may be regarded as indispensable to meet German aggression, but at the same time I am apprehensive of the effect of such a measure on Herr Hitler in his present state of mind, excited and elated as he is by his successes in Czecho-Slovakia and Memel.

³ No. 446 was repeated to Berlin as telegram No. 74.

No. 482

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 6 Telegraphic¹ [N 1557/30/59]

KOVNO, March 22, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

Following is real position at Memel.

2. Lithuanian regular troops have evacuated Memel but one battalion 'riflemen's association' is still in the town. Lithuanian military authorities have given instructions that incidents are to be avoided at all costs.

3. This morning Memelland 'S.A.' began to take possession of Government offices. German regulars are concentrated on the frontier and are expected to enter territory at any time. Work at port is suspended in anticipation of this entry.

4. Latvian Consul-General['s] reports (*vide* last paragraph of my immediately preceding telegram²) would seem to have been exaggerated. Whilst there has been certain amount of panic among departing Jews and Lithuanian refugees no serious incident is reported.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs with plenipotentiary powers accompanied by legal adviser is leaving by air at 3 p.m. today for Berlin.

Repeated to Foreign Office No. 14, Berlin, Paris and Warsaw.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 6, and was repeated as No. 14 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 22 at 5.0 p.m.

² No. 480.

No. 483

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 4.45 p.m.)

No. 124 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [C 3776/3356/18]

PARIS, March 22, 1939

My telegram No. 122.¹

Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just informed me that reply of French Government to proposal of His Majesty's Government is without reserve or comment in the affirmative and that they welcome initiative taken by His Majesty's Government with which they are in full agreement.

Repeated to Warsaw and Moscow.

¹ No. 469.

No. 484

Record of an Anglo-French Conversation, held in the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons, on March 22, 1939, at 5 p.m.

[C 3986/19/18]

Present:

Mr. Chamberlain.

Lord Halifax.

Sir A. Cadogan.

Sir E. Phipps.

Mr. Strang (Foreign Office).

M. Georges Bonnet.

M. Corbin.

M. Bressy (Private Secretary to M. Bonnet).

EUROPEAN SITUATION—(continued from previous meeting¹)

Lord Halifax said that there were two points which the meeting might consider: (1) If the Polish reply to our recent approach was evasive or negative, it would be necessary to examine what the next step would be; (2) There had been disturbing information about Hungarian troop movements and about the presence of 20–25 German divisions on the German-Hungarian frontier. He was proposing to send telegrams to His Majesty's Representatives at Budapest and Bucharest, instructing them to support the action the Polish Government were taking with a view to avoiding a clash. He wondered whether it would be possible to take some step in Rome.

M. Bonnet said that, after talking to M. Daladier, he was in a position to say that the French Government were prepared to sign the proposed declaration.

He emphasised the importance of Polish participation, as he had done on

¹ See No. 458.

the previous day. He had enquired of the Polish Ambassador in Paris what Poland would do if Roumania were attacked and if France and Great Britain helped Roumania. The Polish reply had been that no answer could be given unless Roumania herself put the question.

Lord Halifax said that his latest information about the Polish attitude was as follows: His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw had sent a telegram² on the previous day, reporting that M. Beck thought that our proposal demanded serious consideration. His chief preoccupation was Soviet participation. Hitherto, Poland had kept the balance between Germany and the Soviet Union; the proposed declaration would put Poland in the Soviet camp, and the reaction in Germany would be serious. Poland, M. Beck said, must weigh the pros and cons, and meanwhile he could not give any definite answer. He implied that the participation of the Soviet Government would lead to difficulties, but that Poland might be able to associate herself with England and France if Soviet Russia were not included.

Mr. Chamberlain said he expected that Poland would find it more difficult to sign the proposed declaration than to say what she would do if Roumania were attacked. Her view might be that, if she were sure of the support of France and Great Britain, she would be ready to associate herself with them in defending Roumania, since if Roumania went, Poland would soon follow.

M. Bonnet said that he gathered that in the view of the Polish Government there was no imminent danger of an attack by Germany upon Roumania, by Hungary upon Roumania or by Germany upon Hungary. In the Polish view the best course in present circumstances would be to try and improve relations between Roumania and Hungary. The Polish Government insisted on the fact that Roumania, although the ally of Poland, had not asked for any supplementary guarantees from Poland. That being so, it was difficult to discuss the question with other Powers like Great Britain, France and Russia.

M. Bonnet suggested that Great Britain and France might put the following question to Poland: Supposing Germany attacked Roumania, and Great Britain and France rendered assistance, what would Poland do? If the question were put in this form, it would be difficult for Poland to give a negative answer.

Lord Halifax asked whether M. Bonnet thought that, in answering this question, Poland's judgment would be affected by the question whether or not some enquiry was being addressed to the Soviet Union.

M. Bonnet thought that the conversations should be conducted with Poland first; but Poland might well be asked whether, if we could bring in the help of Russia also, Poland would not think this helpful. If things could be kept quiet, and anything in the nature of a public agreement with the Soviet Union avoided, perhaps Poland would accept indirect assistance from the Soviet Union in the shape of war material. If Poland did not participate, Russian assistance would be worth very little; but if Poland did participate, Russian assistance would be important.

Mr. Chamberlain asked why this was so. It was true that the Soviet Union

² See No. 479.

had no common frontier with Germany, but she had a common frontier with Roumania and was therefore in a position to help her.

M. Bonnet here recalled what he had told Lord Halifax on the previous day about his recent conversation with the Roumanian Ambassador at Paris. The latter had said that Polish help was essential, but that Soviet assistance would cause difficulties. The Roumanians remembered more than one Russian invasion, and some of the upper class preferred Hitler to Stalin.

It would, M. Bonnet thought, be an advantage if Soviet help could be accepted by both Poland and Roumania. The important thing, however, was not to give Poland (or, indeed, Roumania) a pretext for running out on account of Russia.

The argument to use would be to point to German action in Czecho-Slovakia and Memel, and to say that if Poland allowed Germany to go into Roumania she was lost. It was therefore of importance to prevent such a development. Great Britain and France would be prepared to help, and it would therefore be reasonable for Poland to accept their collaboration and to work out details. When the basis of such collaboration had been laid, Poland would have less excuse for refusing indirect Soviet assistance in the form of war material or aircraft. Poland still attached importance to her treaty with France, and she desired assistance from Great Britain. Both these facts could be used as a lever to secure her participation in the organisation which we were trying to build up for the defence of Roumania.

Mr. Chamberlain supposed that what Poland would wish to avoid would be any public declaration to the effect that the Soviet Union was collaborating.

Lord Halifax observed that it would be unfortunate if we were now so to act as to give the Soviet Government the idea that we were pushing her to one side.

M. Bonnet thought it might be possible to explain the situation to M. Litvinov.

The object in view was to prevent the expansion of Germanism. In order to do this, Germany must be made to feel that she would meet with resistance in the east. If Poland and Roumania gave the impression that they were not favourable to any scheme for the organisation of defence against Germany, it would be impossible to produce such an impression on Germany. Hitler would certainly conclude that he risked nothing if Poland and Roumania did not resist.

M. Bonnet himself could not believe that Poland would refuse to collaborate. The question was one of life and death to her.

M. Corbin suggested that it would still be possible to say that we were in consultation with the Soviet Government.

Lord Halifax thought the conclusion to which the conversation was tending was the following: The first step would be to think of the particular case of Roumania, and to assure ourselves (1) that Roumania would resist, and (2) that, if Roumania resisted, Poland would support her. In order to persuade Poland to commit herself to support Roumania, Great Britain and France

would have to give Poland a private undertaking that, if Poland came in, they would both come in also. Having reached this understanding with Poland, it might be suggested to both Poland and Roumania that they should not raise any objection to our doing our best, both in their interest and in our own, to secure Soviet participation.

M. Bonnet agreed with this conclusion, and thought that something might be done on these lines. He had gained the impression that the Poles did not like vague obligations, but, if something precise could be put before them, they would probably accept.

Mr. Chamberlain assumed that an attack by Hungary would be treated in the same way as an attack by Germany. Germany might well apply the modern technique, and deliver her attack in the guise of an attack by Hungary.

M. Bonnet repeated that the French Government were ready to sign the proposed declaration, if His Majesty's Government wished to go on with it.

Mr. Chamberlain said the value of the declaration lay in it being signed by four Powers. If two of the four refused to sign, it would not carry the same weight. The participation of the Soviet Union in a public declaration made the participation of Poland and others very difficult.

Lord Halifax said that if this was the conclusion, the next step would be to do whatever was necessary to ascertain the views of the Polish and Roumanian Governments on the limited question of assistance to Roumania.

M. Bonnet agreed.

M. Corbin suggested that the question of Hungary should not be overlooked. Hungary was no doubt now a satellite of Germany, but Poland still regarded Hungary as her friend, while Roumania considered her as a possible enemy. Could not Hungary be somehow brought into the proposed combination? When the Polish and Roumanian Governments were being consulted would it not be possible to inform the Hungarian Government also, since by so doing we might make it easier for her to safeguard her independence against German pressure?

M. Bonnet suggested that the Soviet Union might be asked at the same time in what way they could help Poland and Roumania, on the assumption that Great Britain and France also gave assistance.

Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that neither Great Britain nor France could give direct help to Roumania. Their assistance would have to take the form of pressure on Germany's western front.

Lord Halifax said that another point that might arise was that Poland would no doubt expect Great Britain, France and Roumania to do for her what it was now proposed that Great Britain, France and Poland should do for Roumania.

Mr. Chamberlain remarked that it was important to remember in this connexion that Poland had a common frontier with Germany, while Roumania had not.

Lord Halifax said that he understood, therefore, that we were to proceed on the assumption that if Roumania were attacked and offered resistance,

and if Poland went to her assistance, Great Britain and France would both also join in giving assistance; and that the proposed approach to Poland and Roumania would be made by Great Britain and France simultaneously. It would, however, first be necessary to wait for the formal reply of the Polish Government (though not of the Soviet Government) to the approach that His Majesty's Government had made in regard to the declaration.

Mr. Chamberlain said that if the Polish reply, as was to be expected, was negative or evasive, the intention would not be to press them any further, but to try the new procedure now proposed.

Relations with Germany

M. Bonnet said that the State Secretary had received the French protest about Czecho-Slovakia pretty badly, and had said that France would regret it. The French Ambassador had the impression that responsible circles in Berlin were critical of Hitler's latest move. The Italian Ambassador in Berlin had also been far from enthusiastic, and had, indeed, not allowed his Military Attaché to go to meet Hitler on his return from Prague. Unofficial emissaries from Rome had let it be known in Paris that the Italian Government had not been informed of Herr Hitler's intentions, had much regretted what had passed and had begun to feel themselves threatened.

Mr. Chamberlain remarked that the assurances given by Herr Hitler to Signor Mussolini might well be broken in the same way as those given to himself.

Lord Halifax said that His Majesty's Government had not come to any decision about the date of Sir N. Henderson's return to Berlin, though he did not think they would be in any hurry about it.

M. Bonnet said that the view of the French Ambassador in Berlin, who had also been withdrawn, was that it was dangerous for France not to be represented by her Ambassador in Berlin. The French Government proposed to send him back at a suitable moment, since they thought it would be useful to have him there. When withdrawing him, they had never had it in mind to break off relations with Germany.

Lord Halifax said he recognised the force of this, and thought the two Governments should keep in touch on this matter, and if possible act together.

Spain

M. Bonnet said that, as the British Ministers knew, the French had interned the Spanish Republican fleet at Bizerta and disarmed it. General Franco had now, basing himself on the agreement concluded by M. Bérard,³ asked for the return of these ships.

As the British Ministers also knew, there were 450,000 Spanish refugees in the south of France, of whom 250,000 were soldiers. It required two army corps to guard these refugees, and M. Bonnet added in confidence that this situation would make it impossible for France to mobilise in that area in case

³ The reference is to an agreement, announced on March 1, by which the French Government undertook to restore all Spanish property in France.

of trouble. The Spanish Government were only taking back 300 of these refugees a day. Marshal Pétain had been pressing for an acceleration of the rate of repatriation. It was important to secure this on grounds of national defence.

General Franco, however, was bargaining, and refused to increase the rate of repatriation unless the French returned the ships at Bizerta.

M. Bonnet was, on the whole, in favour of returning the ships, though he was aware that, if a conflict broke out and General Franco intervened against France, he would be attacked for having returned them.

He wished, however, to know what view His Majesty's Government would take. There was also the question whether France, by returning the ships, would be violating the Non-Intervention Agreement.

Mr. Chamberlain said that at first sight both he and Lord Halifax thought that His Majesty's Government would have no objection to the return of the ships, but it would be necessary first to consult the Admiralty and Lord Plymouth.⁴ He would try to give M. Bonnet a reply on the following day.

French Air Force

Mr. Chamberlain said he hoped M. Bonnet would excuse him if he raised a rather delicate point. During the conversations in Paris in November 1938 M. Daladier had told him that at the end of the spring French aircraft production would be 400 a month. He had expressed his astonishment, since this would mean a fivefold increase. The end of the spring had not yet come, but his present information seemed to confirm the doubts he had expressed.

Since that time a mission of production experts from France had visited this country. He was bound to say they had not created a very good impression upon our experts here. Our own people were well acquainted with the difficulties of increasing production, and, indeed, had been successful in overcoming them. They thought, therefore, that their French colleagues would put questions on this subject, and that they would be able to exchange notes on their common difficulties. They found, however, that the French Mission did not appear to realise what the difficulties were. This situation had caused His Majesty's Government some anxiety. Could M. Bonnet give some idea of present and future aircraft production in France?

M. Bonnet admitted that he had had his doubts about the figures given by M. Daladier. Difficulties had been created by the social laws passed by M. Blum's first Government, particularly the collective contracts. M. Daladier proposed to issue decrees under his new full powers, amending this earlier legislation, and the hours of work in the armament industries would be still further increased. This should improve the situation.

As regards present figures, he could say in confidence that during the last month 100 aircraft had been produced. By July or August the figure would be about 250 or 300. Purchases were also being made in the United States.

⁴ The Earl of Plymouth was Chairman of the Non-Intervention Committee and one of the two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs.

⁵ See Volume III of this Series, No. 325.

Mr. Chamberlain said that his information from the United States led him to believe that the Americans had not given the same attention to military aircraft as to civil aircraft, and that in design their military aircraft were inferior to the British.

M. Bonnet said that President Roosevelt had agreed to give the French a machine which was not yet in the service in the American air force. This was a very good machine, but it would not come into full production until the following September.

Mr. Chamberlain said that, without wishing to intrude, he would assure M. Bonnet that, if there was anything we could do to help the French to build up their output, we should be glad to collaborate. Our own difficulties had been successfully overcome, and our production was now nearly 600 aircraft a month.

M. Bonnet asked whether it would be possible to buy aircraft in Great Britain?

Mr. Chamberlain said he doubted whether there was any surplus available.

M. Bonnet asked whether he could take it that our figure was 600 a month.

Mr. Chamberlain said he could not remember the exact figure, but it was nearly 600—perhaps about 580. In September last the figure had been only 250.

(The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.)

No. 485

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 22, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 72 Telegraphic [C 3806/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 6.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 68.¹

M. Beck said today that he is instructing the Polish Ambassador to propose that His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government should immediately enter into a secret agreement of consultation in the sense of the declaration proposed in your telegram No. 43.² This agreement would not prejudice any final decision regarding that declaration on which he would communicate the view of his Government later as they had not yet had time to give it full consideration. Secret agreement would not affect the position of France as their existing Treaty of Alliance already contains a consultative clause and of course it is obvious that any arrangement come to between our two Governments would be communicated to the French Government.

I gather that M. Beck's object in suggesting such an arrangement is that he should not be compelled openly to insist on exclusion of the Soviets from any joint declaration.

As I am not fully acquainted with what passed in your conversation with

¹ No. 479.

² No. 446.

Count Raczyński³ I feel it would be best not to offer any observations on M. Beck's proposal more especially as the Polish Ambassador is to put it before you.

³ See No. 471.

No. 486

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 3906/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 6.46 p.m.

M. Beck asked me to come and see him this morning and gave me the gist of your conversation with the Polish Ambassador yesterday.¹

Your Lordship had I gathered asked whether you could assume that Poland would not submit to any ultimatum regarding Danzig and M. Beck is instructing the Polish Ambassador to inform you that your assumption is correct. The Polish Government have no intention of following the example of Czecho-Slovakia and Lithuania. While they have no immediate fears regarding Danzig they nevertheless feel in the near future (whether before or after M. Beck's visit to London he did not say) they must have an exchange of views with the German Government and choose whether either [*sic*] to maintain the *status quo* or to draw up a provisional *modus vivendi* or reach some definite settlement. In such a discussion they did not intend to submit to any dictated terms.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ See No. 471.

No. 487

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 71 Telegraphic [N 1608/30/59]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 6.47 p.m.

My telegram No. 69.¹

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning what attitude the Polish Government were going to take up regarding Memel. M. Beck expressed the view that there was nothing to be done as regards Memelland but that it was essential to watch very carefully any attempt of Germany to establish her hegemony over Lithuania proper. He thought that if Lithuania showed signs of being prepared seriously to resist any such German threat it would be advisable that we should all discreetly offer her support of an economic nature in order to strengthen her powers of resistance. It is possible that the Polish Ambassador may make some such proposal to you.

Repeated to Kovno, Riga and Berlin.

¹ No. 478.

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 139 Telegraphic [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 22, 1939, 7.20 p.m.*

My telegram No. 135.¹

1. Please convey a further message to the State Department on the following lines for the confidential information of the President.

2. His Majesty's Minister in Bucharest was assured on March 20 by King Carol² that there had at no moment been any question of a German ultimatum although there was much that was unpalatable in German proposals. King Carol stated that Roumania would resist German pressure but could not do so indefinitely without support. King Carol hesitated, however, to give His Majesty's Minister detailed information of German proposals. The Roumanian General Staff also remain worried at news of mobilisation preparations in Germany and troop movements in Czecho-Slovakia which they consider greater than are warranted by recent events. They are convinced Hungary would not resist the passage of German troops through that country.

3. Preliminary replies have now been received to the enquiries mentioned in paragraph 6 of my telegram No. 135. The Greek Prime Minister stated³ that in the event of aggression against Roumania Greece would fulfil her obligations under the Balkan Pact. As regards the guarantee of the Roumanian frontier, which went beyond the limits of Balkan Pact, Greece would examine sympathetically and in collaboration with Turkey and Yugoslavia any Roumanian proposal while taking into account eventual attitude of Great Britain and France. In his view everything depended on Yugoslavia since without her support it would be impossible for Greece and Turkey to guarantee military assistance to Roumania.

4. The Regent of Yugoslavia in his turn made a similar enquiry⁴ regarding the intentions of His Majesty's Government. He expressed surprise that the Roumanian Government had not approached him and subsequently confirmed that no ultimatum had been presented to the latter.

5. The Turkish reply⁵ also states that no communication had been received from the Roumanian Government, but that the Turkish Government would study in a friendly spirit any proposal His Majesty's Government might wish to make, and would carry out her obligations under the Balkan Entente.

6. The Polish Foreign Minister⁶ also doubted whether an ultimatum had been delivered and stated that if so he would have to go into the question fully with his own Government and the Roumanian Government before expressing any view.

7. The Soviet Government have replied⁷ expressing surprise that the

¹ No. 454.

² See No. 443.

³ See No. 439.

⁴ See No. 423.

⁵ See No. 421.

⁶ See No. 443.

⁷ See No. 420.

⁸ See No. 400.

Roumanian Government had not approached them but proposing a conference of British, Soviet, French, Polish, Roumanian and Turkish representatives.

8. The French reply⁸ states that their information generally agrees with that received by His Majesty's Government. They were making enquiries of the Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet Governments whose replies would have an important bearing but they considered Roumania to be the last obstacle to the triumph of German imperialism and therefore declared themselves ready to assist Roumania if she were the object of German aggression. Effective assistance was however dependent on common Franco-British resistance and the French Government were therefore ready to collaborate with His Majesty's Government in an examination of concerted action. His Majesty's Minister in Paris was assured verbally that France would go to Roumania's assistance irrespective of the Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet replies.

9. The above views represent the reactions to our first enquiries based upon the Roumanian Minister's disquieting information regarding the German-Roumanian economic negotiations (my telegram No. 135). No final replies have yet been received to the later proposal summarised in my telegram No. 136⁹ which relates not only to aggression against Roumania but to any action threatening the independence of any European State.

⁸ See No. 453.

⁹ Not printed. See No. 454, note 4.

No. 489

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 23, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 76 Telegraphic [C 3808/3356/18]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939, 9.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 72.¹

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

M. Beck would clearly not achieve one of our objects namely to give public warning to Herr Hitler.

2. But publication with Poland's¹ consent might be possible after Poland had been assured in secret discussion that effective and immediate steps to resist German aggression were contemplated by the Western Powers.

3. Difficulty about Danzig is that it is not *in itself* a good *casus belli* and while M. Beck would be glad to know (though he could not admit it) that he was not without backing in the event of negotiations with Germany taking a nasty turn yet he is naturally thinking more of what he can get than what he can give in the way of collective security, the occupation of Memel has brought him a step nearer to our ideas and his offer of secret discussions should not I feel be rejected out of hand but used to complete his conversion.

¹ No. 485.

4. It is clear that the other two points of German pressure namely Roumania and Lithuania are of vital interest to Poland. I shall not forget to impress this on M. Beck.

No. 490

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 42 Telegraphic [C 3821/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 22, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 39.¹

M. Litvinov sent for me this evening and informed me as follows:—

‘We are in agreement with the British proposal and accept text of declaration. The Soviet Government will give its signatures as soon as both France and Poland have accepted the British proposal and promised their signatures.’

2. The Soviet Government suggest that the declaration should be signed by the Prime Minister as well as by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of each country. They are also anxious that not only the Balkan but also Baltic and Scandinavian countries should be invited to adhere after publication.

3. He said that he would inform the press tomorrow and I was unable to try to dissuade him as he was shocked to see from the local press this morning that your proposal had been published in London² despite the last paragraph of your telegram No. 34.³

Repeated to Paris and Warsaw.

¹ No. 461.

² Reports of the proposed Four-Power Declaration appeared in the London press on March 22.

³ No. 446.

No. 491

Sir E. Phipps¹ (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 125 Telegraphic [C 3781/3356/18]

PARIS, March 22, 1939, 11.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 124.²

French Government in their official reply, just received, give as indicated by M. Léger their entire assent to His Majesty's Government's proposal.

Text follows by air bag March 23.³

Repeated to Warsaw and Moscow.

¹ This is presumably an error for Mr. Campbell. Sir E. Phipps was in London for the visit of M. Lebrun.

² No. 483.

³ See No. 508.

No. 492

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)

No. 151 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3782/19/18]

PARIS, March 22, 1939

Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 141 Saving¹ of March 18.

I gather from Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the French Ambassador in Berlin is not likely to return to his post for an indefinite period, certainly not before the international sky clears.

Copy Berlin.

¹ No. 411.

No. 493

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)

No. 152 Saving: Telegraphic [N 1554/30/59]

PARIS, March 22, 1939

Saying that I was not doing so on instructions, I asked the Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs this afternoon whether he could give me an indication of the French Government's views on the subject of Memel. M. Léger said that he could not give me the views of his Government, by whom no decision had been taken so far, but that in his own opinion the seizure of Memel by Germany did not call for action on the part of France and Great Britain. We now found ourselves on the basis of the preservation of the balance in Europe, and it was incumbent upon us to concern ourselves in the first place with matters which definitely affected that balance and, therefore, our vital interests. He did not consider that Memel fell into this category. Its possession by Germany would not materially increase her strength or her capacity to wage war against France and Great Britain. It was because Roumania could supply Germany with the means of carrying on such a war (means which she at present lacked), that it was necessary to protect that country. If the Germans proceeded from Memel into Lithuania, the matter might begin to be a cause for preoccupation. But even then, I gathered, he doubted whether action would be called for. The German seizure of Memel might have some advantage in disquieting Poland and inclining her to take position with the Western Powers.

No. 494

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)

No. 156 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3784/3356/18]

PARIS, March 22, 1939

When I called to see him this afternoon, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that he would like to inform me of the attitude of Poland during the last few days. When, on being informed by M. Léger of the French Government's decision to assist Roumania if attacked

by Germany, the Polish Ambassador was asked what was the attitude of his Government, he had resisted all attempts to extract a definite reply. M. Lukaszewicz had maintained first that there was no present threat to Roumania and therefore the question did not for the moment arise. Secondly, any threat towards Roumania that there might be would come not from Germany but from Hungary, and for this reason he begged that the French Government might urge on the Hungarian and Roumanian Governments a moderate policy towards each other. (This the French Government had at once done, as a matter of form.) Thirdly, the treaty relations between Roumania and Poland, while general in form, in fact only took the Soviet Union into account: it was not in practice directed against Germany. In any case Roumania had not asked for Poland's help against Germany, and therefore the question was not a matter for discussion by Poland with a third party.

M. Léger considered these arguments purely specious, and designed to enable Poland to evade a direct answer. He had pressed His Excellency very strongly but without success.

Now, however, that His Majesty's Government had proposed a Four-Power declaration in a general form and without specific reference to Roumania, he thought it would be impossible for the Polish Government to evade a decision. He seemed to think that the decision would be in favour of the proposal of His Majesty's Government, since otherwise the Polish Government would have to appear before their public as rejecting an offer of a very wide guarantee in favour of throwing in their lot with Germany with all the consequences that that entailed. They might find a certain difficulty about appearing as co-signatories of a document with Russia; if it was so, means could no doubt be found to get over the difficulty. The President of the Council was to see the Polish Ambassador again this evening and intended to hold strong language to him.

M. Léger said that the French Government could never be sure whether representations to the Polish Ambassador or to the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs reached the Polish Government in the form in which they were made. The French Government therefore could not be sure of being able to give effective assistance to His Majesty's Government in promoting with Poland the proposal for a declaration, and he ventured to think that it would be necessary for His Majesty's Government to press her proposal on the Polish Government with very clear and firm language.

Copy sent to Warsaw.

No. 495

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 27)

No. 62 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4151/7/12]

PRAGUE, March 22, 1939

The Czech Press Bureau reports today that Dr. Hacha communicated to M. Beran¹ yesterday a decision with regard to the dissolution of Parliament.

¹ President of the Council.

It is also reported in the press that President Hacha 'as representative of the nation in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia' has decided to form a 'Committee of the national community', whose task it will be to unite all political groups in a single movement which will be in a position to lay down the new lines of political life. It is stated that the President has ordered the Committee to group together in the shortest possible time and with the support of the Government individuals of every political complexion who have understood the new situation.

The names of the Committee as given in the press are mostly unknown to me but I note that General Gayda is not included.

No. 496

Foreign Office¹ Memorandum

[C 3941/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 22, 1939

Summary of Replies received to our recent Enquiries addressed to Countries likely to be affected by further German Expansion.

I. Enquiry in respect of Aggression against Roumania only, arising out of Roumanian Minister's Communication of March 17

Turkey

The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs replied in writing² to the effect that the Turkish Government had received no communication from the Roumanian Government. The Turkish Government would however study in a friendly spirit any proposal His Majesty's Government might wish to make and would carry out her obligations under the Balkan Entente.

Greece

The Greek reply³ stated that in the event of aggression against Roumania Greece would fulfil her obligations under the Balkan Pact. As regards the guarantee of the Roumanian frontier, which went beyond the limits of the Balkan Pact, Greece would examine sympathetically and in collaboration with Turkey and Yugoslavia any Roumanian proposal, while taking into account the eventual attitude of Great Britain and France. The Prime Minister stated verbally that in his view everything depended on Yugoslavia since without her support it would be impossible for Greece and Turkey to guarantee military assistance to Roumania.

Yugoslavia

The Regent of Yugoslavia's reply⁴ was to make a similar enquiry regarding the intentions of His Majesty's Government. He expressed surprise that the Roumanian Government had not approached him and subsequently confirmed that no ultimatum had been presented to them. His Majesty's Minister at Belgrade has expressed the opinion that Yugoslavia will not in

¹ This memorandum was written by Mr. F. K. Roberts.

² See No. 423.

³ See No. 439.

⁴ See No. 420.

any circumstances commit herself in advance to war with Germany and would remain neutral till the last possible moment.

Poland

M. Beck⁵ did not believe the Roumanian Minister's statement to be correct. If, however, it proved to be correct, he would have to go into the matter fully with the Roumanian Government and his own Government before expressing a view.

In conversation with the Secretary of State on the 21st March⁶ M. Bonnet said he had spoken to the Polish Ambassador on March 19 and asked him what assistance Poland was prepared to give to stem the German advance. The Polish Ambassador replied that the Polish-Roumanian Treaty covered the case of Russia but not of Germany. He was authorised by Colonel Beck to inform the French Government:—

(1) that Poland attached importance to the Franco-Polish Alliance and would fulfil her obligations but the Alliance was only valid in the case of a German attack on France;

(2) that the most useful assistance to give to Roumania was not to bring in Russia but to take immediate reactions [*sic* ? action] at Budapest and Bucharest where French and British diplomacy could act usefully in conjunction with Poland. M. Bonnet added that the official Polish reply had since reached Paris. He had not himself seen it but heard it was unsatisfactory being full of reservations.

U.S.S.R.

M. Litvinov's reply⁷ was to propose a conference of British, Soviet, French, Polish, Roumanian and Turkish representatives. He enquired what line His Majesty's Government were proposing to take themselves and expressed surprise that he had not been approached by the Roumanian Government.

In conversation with the Secretary of State on March 21 M. Bonnet said he had asked the Soviet Ambassador on March 18 what would be the Russian attitude if France helped Roumania even though under no obligation to do so. The Soviet Ambassador's reply had been to suggest the calling of a conference at Bucharest of the States chiefly concerned. M. Bonnet had replied that he did not think Roumania would be very enthusiastic.

France

The French reply⁸ stated that their information generally agreed with that received by His Majesty's Government. They were making enquiries of the Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet Governments whose replies would have an important bearing but considered Roumania to be the last obstacle to the triumph of German imperialism and therefore declared themselves ready to assist Roumania if she were the object of German aggression. Effective assistance was however in their view dependent on common Franco-British resistance and the French Government were therefore ready to collaborate

⁵ See No. 400.

⁷ See No. 421.

⁶ See No. 458.

⁸ See No. 451.

with His Majesty's Government in an examination of concerted action. His Majesty's Minister at Paris was assured verbally that France would go to Roumania's assistance irrespective of the Polish, Yugoslav and Soviet replies.

Roumania

The Roumanian Government have sent a statement⁹ to His Majesty's Government to the effect that Roumania is anxious to avoid anything suggestive of provocation to Germany and therefore deprecates the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance. The Roumanian Government suggest, however, that the Western Powers should state in precise terms that they will not allow any further changes of frontier and will support any State that defends its independence with all its military forces. This statement was prepared before the Secretary of State's speech on March 20, but the Roumanian Government still deprecate any general pact of mutual assistance and fear that public opinion in Poland, Yugoslavia and, to some extent, Roumania would be opposed to the inclusion of Russia.

In conversation with the Secretary of State on March 21, M. Bonnet said that the Roumanian Ambassador in Paris had made it clear to him on March 18 that Russia was not popular in Roumania. After considerable persuasion he had raised no objection to an approach being made by the French Government to Moscow but had begged that the French Government would not involve the Roumanian Government.

II. Reactions to His Majesty's Government's Proposal for a Joint Declaration by Great Britain, France, U.S.S.R. and Poland

No final reply¹⁰ has yet been received to the enquiries addressed to the French, Soviet and Polish Governments. The following preliminary reactions have, however, been received:

U.S.S.R.

M. Litvinov¹¹ was clearly disappointed that his earlier proposal for a conference at Bucharest had been considered premature and has issued a communiqué regarding this proposal. M. Litvinov still thought agreement regarding the proposed declaration would be more easily obtained by a conference. He expressed the belief that the Polish Government would not commit themselves to the proposed declaration.

M. Bonnet in conversation with the Secretary of State on March 21 thought that the U.S.S.R. would have to be pinned down to say exactly what she was prepared to do, since the Russians liked to make public declarations for propaganda purposes.

Poland

The first reaction of the Polish Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs¹² was fear regarding the effect of such a declaration upon the attitude of Germany.

⁹ See No. 457.

¹⁰ This memorandum was written before the receipt of Nos. 483, 485 and 490.

¹¹ See No. 461.

¹² See No. 459.

towards Poland. He also referred to the difficulty of military or political co-operation between Poland and Soviet Russia, although he admitted that Polish hostility was less now than formerly. He promised to consult M. Beck and the other members of the Polish Government with a view to an early reply. M. Beck informed Sir H. Kennard at dinner on March 21¹³ that the proposal demanded very serious consideration. His chief pre-occupation was the suggested participation of the U.S.S.R. In view of this, Polish participation would definitely bring her off the fence and range her in the Soviet camp against Germany. He implied that Poland might associate herself with England and France if the U.S.S.R. were omitted.

His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw has emphasised¹⁴ the great difficulty in which the Polish Government is placed. The declaration would be welcomed by public opinion, but the Polish attitude seems to be that she is not immediately threatened. Sir H. Kennard thinks that the Polish Government would prefer to strengthen their existing agreements with France and Roumania and even with the U.S.S.R. rather than provoke Germany by signing and publishing a new agreement directed against Germany.

The Polish Ambassador in London informed the Secretary of State on March 21¹⁵ that he personally warmly welcomed His Majesty's Government's proposal, although he could not say what the view of his Government would be.

France

In conversation with Sir A. Cadogan on March 20¹⁶ M. Corbin personally expressed some doubts regarding the attitude of his Government towards the British proposal, as he thought it would be regarded as little more than words, when deeds were really required. He thought, in particular, that the Polish Government might regard it in this light. The wording of the declaration was thereupon stiffened up. In conversation with the Secretary of State on March 21 M. Bonnet said that the French Government in general looked at the situation in much the same way as it had been described by the Secretary of State. (The Secretary of State had suggested that if the general declaration could be secured the next step would be to approach the Balkan Entente and ask whether they were prepared to act together in case of aggression by Germany, if they were assured of the support of the Great Powers.) M. Bonnet, however, regarded it as absolutely essential to secure Polish collaboration, since, without this, Russian help could hardly be effective. He thought the strongest pressure must be brought to bear upon Poland, even to the extent of threats, to secure her collaboration. As things were at present the Franco-Polish Pact only came into operation if France herself were attacked by Germany. He agreed the time had come to call a halt to Germany, but the proposed obligation was so vast that it was necessary to know exactly how each country stood and exactly what action they could and would take.

¹³ See No. 479.

¹⁵ See No. 471.

¹⁴ See No. 465.

¹⁶ See No. 506.

Turkey

The members of the Balkan Entente have not been formally consulted regarding this declaration, but the Secretary of State on March 21¹⁷ gave the Turkish Ambassador a general idea of the British proposals. The latter replied, emphasising that he was speaking with a full knowledge of the policy of the Turkish Government, that they would be prepared to go to all lengths with Great Britain if they were assured of British support and if they could rely on direct British assistance if they themselves were attacked in the Mediterranean. In any case they would only depart from neutrality if they were on the same side as Great Britain. This attitude was unconditional and would not be affected by the Polish and Russian replies. Apart from this Turkey would in all cases observe all her existing treaty obligations.

F. K. ROBERTS

¹⁷ See No. 472.

No. 497

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 69 [*N* 1592/30/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 22, 1939*

Sir,

The Lithuanian Minister called to-day and, on instructions from his Government, gave me an account of the circumstances in which the Memel-land had been ceded to Germany, in the terms of the attached *aide-mémoire*.

2. I asked M. Balutis to assure his Government of the deep sympathy of His Majesty's Government with them in the painful situation in which they had been placed. As he had said, the blow was not unexpected; but that, I knew, did nothing to lessen its effect. The Lithuanian Government certainly could not be blamed for the action they had taken—indeed, in my opinion they could have taken no other, though with any other Government but the German they might have hoped for a reasonable compromise on any demands put to them. As he was aware, His Majesty's Government had made it plain, on the last occasion by their *démarche* at Berlin in December last,¹ that, as a signatory to the Memel Convention, they expected the German Government to abide by the Statute and saw no excuse for its violation, and they had always been ready to join with other signatories to the Convention in endeavouring to secure respect for the Statute in so far as it was in their power to do so. Now, however, we were faced with a situation in which no legal rights were respected.

3. I then asked the Minister whether there was any indication that the German demands were likely to go beyond the cession of Memel, and include, for example, special economic concessions affecting Lithuania as a whole. He replied that he could only say that no further demands had been made by

¹ See Appendix VII.

the German Minister for Foreign Affairs. Indeed, Herr von Ribbentrop had expressly declared that the cession of Memel was all that was required, and that after that there should be no obstacle to normal and friendly relations between the two countries; but he agreed with my comment that we had heard that before, and added that there was no knowing what would be demanded of the Lithuanian delegation which was then on its way to Berlin to draw up the actual terms for the transfer of the territory.

4. In that connexion M. Balutis put to me very earnestly the question, if now or in the future the Lithuanian Government were faced with far-reaching demands going beyond the question of Memel and affecting the political or economic independence of what remained of Lithuania, would the attitude of His Majesty's Government be the same as in the question of Memel, or could the Lithuanian Government hope for a greater measure of assistance from them? I replied that this was part of the general question of the attitude to be adopted towards the German threat to the independence of other nations, which was at this moment engaging all the attention of His Majesty's Government. I could not tell him at this stage what their final decision would be on all the aspects of that question. I realised very well how urgent these matters were, and I promised to reply to his enquiries as soon as I was in a position to do so.

5. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw and His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN No. 497

Aide-mémoire

Last Monday, the 20th March, at noon, M. Urbsys, the Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, while passing through Berlin on his return from Rome, where he attended the Coronation of the Pope, had an interview with Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. In the course of this interview Herr von Ribbentrop made a statement to the effect that the Memel Territory, of which Germany was deprived by the Treaty of Versailles, must now be restored to Germany without any further delay.

3. If Lithuania would not do this of her own accord, Herr von Ribbentrop continued, the German army might do it, and in connexion with this statement he added—and repeated it several times—that once the armed forces should start moving, there were no means of knowing or telling where they would stop, since, as he again repeated, once the army was on the move, all frontiers ceased to have any importance.

4. Herr von Ribbentrop further declared that in case of this last eventuality taking place, that is to say, once the army started moving, the Government of the Reich would not then enter into any negotiations with Lithuania.

5. Asked by M. Urbsys whether there might not be found any other way, intermediate between these two extreme methods of solution, as proposed by Herr von Ribbentrop, he emphatically declared that all such possibility was excluded ('ausgeschlossen').

6. The Lithuanian Government, having in view recent developments in the European situation, have for some time envisaged the possibility of such an eventuality taking place. They have accordingly drawn the attention of the signatory Powers to the Memel Convention to such a possibility.¹ Thereby the Lithuanian Government were endeavouring to find some solution of the problem with which they might be so faced.

7. Mindful of the attitude of the signatory Powers, as communicated to the Lithuanian Government, and in view of the position taken by Germany, on the one hand, and, on the other, conscious of their responsibility towards their own country, and, moreover, desiring to avoid an armed conflict with all its incalculable consequences, the Lithuanian Government, after very careful consideration of all aspects of the problem facing them, found no other way out of the difficulty than to bow before necessity, and they therefore felt they were compelled to agree to the German demand to cede the Memel Territory.

¹ See No. 413, note 1.

No. 498

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 65 [C 3946/19/18]

WARSAW, March 22, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith an appreciation by the Military Attaché, Colonel Sword, of the present military situation of Poland in view of recent events.

2. I agree with Colonel Sword's conclusions. There is no doubt that Poland's position has been weakened as the result of Germany's acquisition of Bohemia and Moravia and the declaration of a German protectorate over Slovakia. Further German advances in East Europe can only be detrimental to Polish interests. One thing, however, distinguishes Poland from Czecho-Slovakia, namely, that the Poles can be depended upon to fight for their independence and territorial integrity, even if they knew that resistance was almost hopeless. Public opinion here has received an overwhelming shock by recent events, and this is a point on which Poles of every class are unanimous.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard

No. D 2

WARSAW, March 22, 1939

Sir,

In view of the quickly developing situation in Central Europe, I have the honour briefly to set out below certain considerations of military importance affecting, first, the policy which Poland may be expected to adopt, and, secondly, the extent to which our own attitude towards Poland might be affected by the circumstances envisaged.

2. In the first place, I propose shortly to consider some of the factors affecting a main object of Poland's foreign policy—the maintenance of a precariously balanced independence.

3. Considering Poland's neighbours in turn, Germany can put in the field more than 100 divisions, and an extremely powerful air force, supported by a formidable navy.

Herr Hitler may well have been thrown into such a state of elation by his recent successes as to be spurred on, partly by unfavourable foreign reactions, to still further acts of aggression. Previous counsels of moderation have proved wrong in his eyes, and he may now feel that the time has come to risk the final stake of a general conflagration. On the other hand, he may still be feeling his way through timely opportunism to further accretions of strength, by a series of limited steps whose ultimate direction is as yet only imperfectly crystallised in his mind. This latter method had proved so successful in the past in the face of an admittedly unco-ordinated and hesitant resistance as possibly to warrant its continuance in the future, in the eyes of the Führer. It seems to be open to doubt whether Herr Hitler can be actively desirous of precipitating a world war when he appears to be so well placed to attain his ends by the proved method of taking control over countries whose resistance has previously been methodically undermined.

4. The acquisition by Germany of the armaments, aircraft and factories of Bohemia and Moravia has had the additional advantage to Germany of depriving Roumania of considerable war material ordered in Czecho-Slovakia. The penetration of German domination along Poland's southern border through Slovakia has opened up new avenues of invasion, though these lie, it is true, through difficult mountainous country inadequately provided with northerly communications. On the whole, though the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia might lead to internal difficulties furnished by an intransigent minority in the event of a prolonged war, immediate material gains for Germany are considerable. Moreover, the hatred of Czechs for Poles, inflamed by the recent Teschen *coup*, might prove fertile ground for German propaganda. The number of divisions which Germany might employ in a war against Poland would depend entirely on her commitments on her other frontiers.

5. A school of thought exists in Poland which appears to envisage a possibility of the rescue of Hungary from the German camp, and points to

anti-Nazi measures effected by the Hungarian Government. Hungary is, however, so patently already in the grip of Germany, on whom she is economically and politically dependent to a high degree, and by whom she is half-encircled, that she can hardly be relied upon actively to support Poland in a war against Germany. Her interests in Transylvania, moreover, tend towards an adventure in Roumania, with support from Germany. The establishment of a common frontier with Poland has increased the threat of an invasion of Roumania by Hungary through the establishment of Hungarian troops on her northern flank.

6. The military conventions of the alliance between Poland and Roumania originally envisaged Russia as the aggressor. Now that the political pendulum points towards Germany rather than the U.S.S.R. as a potential aggressor of both Poland and Roumania, the extent to which the commitments of the treaty might be modified has taken on a new significance. An advance through Roumania lies through difficult mountainous terrain, though the fighting value of the Roumanian military forces can hardly be such as to offer serious and prolonged resistance to a staged German invasion. The new strategic position of Germany, moreover, simplifies the task of driving a wedge between Poland and Roumania, possibly facilitated by the fomentation of unrest in Polish Ukraine. The oil-fields of Roumania present a tempting potential victim of German mania for acquisition.

7. Russia is an enigma. Her armed forces are armed and equipped on a lavish scale, and she can put more than 100 divisions in the field. Though the courage and endurance of the rank and file is considerable, and the tactical training of the smaller units is often of a high level, the 'purge' of higher commanders has resulted in a mushroom growth of promotion which must react unfavourably on the leadership and morale of the army. Communications are, moreover, still a factor of great weakness in any large-scale operations, and the internal political and economic situation is so difficult as greatly to increase the hazards of a major war. Thus, while still seriously to be reckoned with in the defence, it is doubtful whether an offensive war would, or could, be undertaken by the Red army with any hope of final success. In any event, the Polish General Staff have stated categorically that Soviet troops would not be allowed to penetrate into Polish territory—though the entry of war material would be permissible. The latter might even include aircraft, and possibly air force personnel in an extreme emergency.

The assured neutrality of the U.S.S.R. would provide a valuable support to Poland's rear, while transit traffic might prove of great importance should Poland be cut off from all contact with the outside world except via Roumania (possessed of an inadequate single railway connexion with Poland and Russia).

8. Lithuania and Latvia might prove valuable allies so far as the diversion of German troops to the East Prussian frontiers was concerned, but their position is such as to render active intervention in a war against Germany most unlikely unless the final victory were almost in the nature of an assured conclusion, or defeat otherwise certain. The recent German *coup* in Memel-

land makes little difference to Poland from a strategic point of view, beyond internally weakening an improbable ally, as no common frontier with Poland is involved.

9. As far as Poland's own forces are concerned, her army is well led and trained, tough and of great endurance, but is deficient in heavy and anti-aircraft artillery. She can probably put some fifty-four divisions and 500 first-line aircraft in the field, but her material resources are insufficient to maintain these forces for a war of long duration. The minorities, which form nearly a third of her population, are a potential source of weakness which is not superficially apparent in the well-fused fabric of the army. Poland's long history of subjection and partition, however, plays a vital part in her attitude towards German aggression, the fear of which is already having the effect of unifying the country.

10. Poland's strategical position is remarkable chiefly for the fact that she is now bounded on three frontiers by Germany. Her outlet to the sea and the Silesian industrial area are both within easy grasp, while the open western plains offer lines of invasion which can be combined with simultaneous advances from East Prussia and the Carpathians. Further, the German air force could be relied upon virtually to destroy any Polish city at will, apart from its preponderance in purely military operations (Warsaw lies at only some 150 kilom. from the East Prussian frontier).

11. At the outset of a Polish-German war, assuming other Baltic countries neutral, the Baltic Sea would undoubtedly approximate to a German 'lake'. As far as possible British assistance is concerned, it is significant that British submarines which operated in the Baltic in 1915-16 had little effect on the important German-Swedish trade, and they were, moreover, based on Russian ports, a condition which may not necessarily obtain again. It seems probable that submarines sent from England to operate in the Baltic, to lay mines or to attack trade, would have little effect under modern conditions of warfare. Any attempt to obtain British sea supremacy in the Baltic would be dependent on the prior destruction or neutralisation of the German heavy ships, when we should be secured against the principal threat to the maintenance of our overseas communications.

France could render Poland no naval assistance, and it is probable that a Polish-German war would break out with Poland's sea communications at Germany's mercy. And Germany's naval policy in the Baltic can be expected to be totalitarian.

12. Immediately after the September crisis, France lost still further face with Poland as an ally who could hardly be relied upon to fulfil her obligations. In any event, the aid which France could lend to Poland in a war with Germany could not well be expected to exceed the diversion of German forces on the French frontier, combined with the supply of war material, the latter itself no easy task owing to difficulties of communication. Nevertheless, recent German actions may have so stirred public opinion in France as considerably to increase the likelihood of her refusing to countenance any further act of German aggression, if only for the main reason that its successful out-

come would bring her own fate all the nearer, and more certain. Thus France's alliances with Roumania¹ and Poland, the former of which appears open to interpretation in somewhat general terms, might yet prove decisive in forcing the issue of France's entry into a war with Germany.

13. Should Germany succeed in extending her 'protection' over Hungary, it might be possible for her so to undermine the internal structure of Roumania as to facilitate the extension of the same process in that country, or at least promote the entry of Hungarian troops into Transylvania. Should Roumania also become German territory, the process of encirclement of Poland by Germany would be carried a grave stage further. Nevertheless, it is open to consideration whether her strategic situation would thereby be so drastically altered for the worse as to justify her entry into war against Germany in defence of Roumania, unless she were absolutely convinced that her entry into the war would immediately invoke the previously guaranteed military aid of France and Great Britain and at least the benevolent neutrality of the U.S.S.R. The part played by the U.S.S.R. is of prime importance to Poland in any war against Germany, but the *public* announcement of any far-reaching Polish-Russian agreement of mutual support might strain Poland's relations with Germany to breaking-point. The experience of Czechoslovakia is deeply impressed on Poland, and the value of treaties as guarantees of military support is at a discount. It would be a difficult task to persuade Poland to enter the field against Germany, except as a result of German violation of Polish soil. Whether Poland would fight in the event of the occupation of Danzig by German troops seems open to doubt, in spite of the assurance of M. Beck and the Polish General Staff that such would be the case.

14. To turn from Poland's point of view to our own attitude towards her, it would seem that any certain knowledge of the extent to which military assistance might be expected from Poland in a war against Germany depends entirely on whether we can, in consultation with France, decide that we are now in a sufficiently strong strategic position definitely to announce our intention of going to war with Germany in certain definite circumstances. Unless we and France are prepared to commit ourselves in advance, it is difficult to see how Poland can be expected to guarantee to defend Roumania even against direct aggression by Hungary or Germany. Meanwhile, the possibility of internal disorder in Roumania provoked by Germany or Hungary would still not be covered.

Nevertheless, there is still the possibility that such a guarantee against aggression backed by France, Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. might be sufficient both: (1) To enable the wiser elements in the Reich to restrain Herr Hitler, and (2) to strengthen the Government of Roumania internally, and thus diminish the danger of her precipitation into the German orbit.

Alternatively, it would seem that any British assistance which might tend to increase the strength and solidarity of Poland, short of definite commit-

¹ The Franco-Roumanian Treaty of Friendship of 1926 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 125, p. 582. The Treaty was renewed in 1936 for a further period of ten years.

ment of military support, would help to impede the unrestricted advance of German aggression and expansion and thus gain time for the completion of our armament programme, and assist in the maintenance of our prestige.

The above considerations necessarily cover ground of wide political and strategical scope, and it is with some diffidence that I have endeavoured to place the alternative military factors in their true perspective.

I have, &c.,

E. R. SWORD

Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 499

Sir R. Lindsay (Washington) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30)

No. 332 [C 4377/19/18]

WASHINGTON, *March 22, 1939*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him herewith a copy of a Note addressed to the German Chargé d'Affaires in Washington by the Department of State signifying the refusal of the United States Government to recognise the Reich Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia.

ENCLOSURE I IN No. 499

Text of Note, dated March 20, 1939, from the Acting Secretary of State, Mr. Sumner Welles, to the German Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Herr Hans Thomsen

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, *March 20, 1939*

Sir,

I acknowledge the receipt of your Note of the 17th March, in which, by direction of your Government, you inform the Government of the United States of the terms of the decree issued on the 16th March by the Government of the Reich announcing the assumption of a protectorate over the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia.

The Government of the United States has observed that the provinces referred to are now under the *de facto* administration of the German authorities. The Government of the United States does not recognise that any legal basis exists for the status so indicated.

The views of this Government with regard to the situation above referred to, as well as with regard to related facts, were made known on the 17th March. I enclose herewith, for the information of your Government, a copy of the statement in which those views were expressed.

Accept, &c.,

SUMNER WELLES

Acting Secretary of State

ENCLOSURE 2 IN No. 499

Statement by the Acting Secretary of State, March 17, 1939

The Government of the United States has on frequent occasions stated its conviction that only through international support of a programme of order based upon law can world peace be assured.

This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of the liberties of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations.

The position of the Government of the United States has been made consistently clear. It has emphasised the need for respect for the sanctity of treaties and of the pledged word, and for non-intervention by any nation in the domestic affairs of other nations; and it has on repeated occasions expressed its condemnation of a policy of military aggression.

It is manifest that acts of wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force are threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilisation. The imperative need for the observance of the principles advocated by this Government has been clearly demonstrated by the developments which have taken place during the past three days.

No. 500

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)*¹

No. 168 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1567/30/59]

BERLIN, *March 23, 1939*

Press announces this morning that Herr Hitler together with Admiral Raeder and General Keitel, left yesterday evening for Swinemünde to embark on the 'Deutschland' en route for Memel. The 'Deutschland' was accompanied on her journey by the armoured ships, 'Admiral Graf Spee' and 'Admiral Scheer', the cruisers 'Nürnberg' and 'Köln', two divisions of destroyers, three torpedo boat flotillas and air escort flotillas.

¹ The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 23, 11.50 a.m.)

No. 170 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1569/30/59]

BERLIN, March 23, 1939

My telegram No. 169.¹

Following is text of Treaty, published in the press this morning, between Germany and Lithuania, signed on behalf of Germany by Herr von Ribbentrop and on behalf of Lithuania by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister M. Urbsys and the Lithuanian Minister at Berlin M. Skirpa.

'The German Reich Chancellor and the President of the Republic of Lithuania have decided to regulate by a State Treaty the reunion of the Memel territory with the German Reich, and hereby to clear up the question outstanding between Germany and Lithuania and thus to open the way for the friendly development of relations between the two countries.

'For this purpose the following plenipotentiaries have been appointed: by the German Reich Chancellor, the Reich Minister Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop; by the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the Minister for Foreign Affairs M. Juozas Urbsys, and the Minister in Berlin M. Kazys Skirpa, who after exchange of their instruments of authority, found to be in good and proper form have agreed to the following terms.

'Article 1. The Memel Territory, separated from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, shall be reunited as from this day with the German Reich.

'Article 2. The Memel Territory shall be evacuated immediately by the Lithuanian military and police forces. The Lithuanian Government shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the territory, in the course of its evacuation, shall be left in proper order. Both parties shall, as required, appoint commissioners who shall carry through the transfer of those administrations which are not in the hands of the autonomous authorities of the Memel Territory.

'The regulation of all other questions resulting from the transfer of sovereignty, especially of economic and financial questions, of questions concerning officials and nationality, shall be subject to a special agreement.

'Article 3. In order to take into account the economic requirements of Lithuania a free harbour zone shall be established for Lithuania at Memel. Details will be regulated separately in accordance with the lines laid down in the attached annexe to this Agreement.

'Article 4. In order to give emphasis to their determination to secure a friendly development of the relations between Germany and Lithuania, both parties bind themselves not to use force the one against the other, nor to support the use of force directed against one of the parties by a third party.

'Article 5. This Treaty shall come into force on the day of signature.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported a German press communiqué announcing the Lithuanian agreement to the cession of Memel.

'In witness thereof the plenipotentiaries of the two parties have signed this Treaty.

'Done in duplicate in the German and Lithuanian languages.

Berlin. March 22, 1939

Signed. Joachim von Ribbentrop.

Signed. Urbsys.

Signed. Skirpa.'

The annexe referred to in Article 3 has not yet been published. The press print Article 4 in leaded capitals.

Repeated to Riga and Kovno.

No. 502

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) and
Sir G. Knox (Budapest)*

No. 53¹ Telegraphic [C 3665/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

Budapest telegram No. 54² (My telegram No. 7³) and Warsaw telegrams Nos. 61⁴ and 64⁵.

Please use your best endeavours to smooth over differences between Hungary and Roumania either alone or in concert with your French and Polish colleagues who are receiving the necessary instructions. You should represent to the Government to which you are accredited that there is all the more need for moderation in the present strained situation, when any provocative action might have incalculable consequences. You should say that similar representations are being made at Budapest (Bucharest).

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris, Sofia and Rome.

¹ No. 53 to Bucharest; No. 9 to Budapest.

² No. 437.

³ No. 427.

⁴ No. 447.

⁵ No. 460.

No. 503

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 54 Telegraphic [C 3665/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

You should urge the Roumanian Government that in taking such precautionary measures as they may consider necessary owing to the present uncertain situation they should use every effort to make it clear that these measures are not aggressive in character. If you think it advisable you can go so far as to say that at the present critical juncture it would seem most unwise for Roumania to press her claims in Ruthenia to the point of creating strained relations between herself and Hungary (see Bucharest telegram No. 62²).

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris, Sofia and Rome.

¹ No. 502.

² No. 467.

No. 504

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Knox (Budapest)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 3665/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 23, 1939, 2.30 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

You may inform the Hungarian Government that I cannot imagine that Roumania would in any circumstances desire to commence hostilities with the Hungarian Government and that any precautionary measures which they may have taken appear to be due solely to the uncertainty of the present situation. You should urge the Hungarian Government to make it clear that any military measures which they feel it necessary to take in view of the general situation are in no way directed against Roumania. You may add that excessive military preparations are bound to excite suspicion. No one in Europe will really believe that Hungary has reason to fear Roumanian aggression. The use of this argument resembles ominously the usual German preparatory propaganda moves, and will inevitably rouse suspicion as to Hungary's real intentions.

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris, Sofia and Rome.

¹ No. 502.

No. 505

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23, 5.50 p.m.)

No. 43 Telegraphic [C 3880/3556/18]

MOSCOW, *March 23, 1939, 6.30 p.m.*

Following from Mr. Hudson for Secretary of State.

The Ambassador and I called on M. Litvinov this afternoon. M. Litvinov began by pointing out that if his policy of organizing resistance to the aggressor had been followed the present situation would never have arisen. I said that it was no use regretting the past; it was the present and the future which counted. He agreed and affirmed his readiness to co-operate and asked what was His Majesty's Government's policy. I replied, as you had authorised me, that, as he knew, it is difficult for His Majesty's Government to take on definite commitments in advance of hypothetical situations but that you did consider it desirable for the Powers whose interests were parallel in the present circumstances to maintain close touch with each other and to concert so far as possible. M. Litvinov agreed and said that he was quite prepared for such consultation which he thought should include all the Powers concerned, both larger and smaller, and he said that in these circumstances the Soviet Government would be prepared to consult with His Majesty's Government and other Governments regarding all suitable measures of resistance whether diplomatic or military or economic. He made it clear that he had in mind the possibility of resistance by force of arms.

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)

No. 695 [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 20th March and the latter read to him the draft of a telegram¹ to Paris, Moscow and Warsaw, which had now been finally approved by the Prime Minister.

2. M. Corbin said that he was only expressing his personal view, but he was sure that his Government would be very much concerned at this proposal. If the declaration which it was proposed to publish consisted only of the text given in the telegram,² it would confirm the impression that the Powers were not disposed to take any action and would only talk when a threat arose.

3. Sir Alexander Cadogan of course pointed out to M. Corbin that in the remainder of the telegram it was explained that we should proceed to an actual discussion of what action should be taken, but he said that the harm would be done by the publication of this bare announcement.

4. In particular, His Excellency said that it would have a very bad effect on M. Beck, who would conclude from it that the Powers would do nothing but talk. He referred to the intimation which we had already received through Paris of the intentions with which M. Beck was coming here, namely, to endeavour to obtain some kind of guarantee from us, in default of which he would return to Poland and reinsure Germany.³

5. His Excellency felt that M. Beck might interpret this declaration as indicating that he would not be able to obtain any actual guarantee.

6. Incidentally His Excellency said that it had been suggested to him from Paris that if approaches were to be made to Poland it might be better to make them to some individual other than M. Beck, though he was not clear as to who should be the individual approached.

7. M. Corbin asked Sir Alexander Cadogan if he had seen the French reply⁴ to our enquiry⁵ of one or two days ago, but Sir Alexander Cadogan told him that it had not yet reached him. He said that it took the form of an unqualified affirmative, that is to say, that France would be prepared to take action in the event of an attack upon Roumania, and France did not even

¹ No. 446.

² In the original draft which was read to M. Corbin the proposed declaration read as follows: 'We the undersigned hereby declare that inasmuch as the security and political independence of European States are matters of common interest and concern, we have pledged ourselves immediately to consult together in the event of any action being taken which appears to constitute a threat to the security or independence of any of them'. See also No. 496, section (ii) (France).

³ In the despatch as drafted the word 'with' appears at this point. It seems to have been accidentally omitted in the text as despatched to Paris.

⁴ See No. 440.

⁵ See No. 388.

in her reply ask whether we should do the same. He felt that the only way of securing Polish and Russian co-operation was for France and ourselves to say boldly that in the event of an attack on Roumania we should both take action.

8. Sir Alexander Cadogan did his best to impress upon M. Corbin that our feeling was that it was desirable to get some rapid agreement. In various quarters to which we had addressed our first enquiry the answer had invariably come back 'what are you prepared to do?' Plainly it was impossible to make any advance along those lines. On the other hand, it was impossible offhand to announce immediately what we should do in any hypothetical eventuality, and we had therefore thought that as a first step it would be of importance to announce an agreement of this kind as a warning signal to Germany, but M. Corbin brushed all that aside and said that he felt convinced himself, though he could not answer for his Government, that the publication of this bare declaration would have a much worse effect than publishing nothing at all. If consultation were decided on, let us consult at once, but do not let us announce that we should meet together to consult when the danger arose, for that was how the declaration would be read failing any addition to it to show that we were definitely concerting action between the Governments concerned.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 507

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Campbell (Paris)

No. 708 [C 3986/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 23, 1939*

Sir,

I had the opportunity of some further conversation with M. Bonnet to-day after luncheon at Windsor. M. Bonnet began by showing me various telegrams that he had received from the French Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin and from the Ambassador at Rome. The messages from Berlin were based, to the best of my recollection, upon conversations that the French Chargé d'Affaires had had with the Belgian and other representatives, informing him of their own conversations with the representatives of the German Foreign Office. The general effect of these exchanges was in the sense of assurances that German policy was not set upon any of the sinister schemes attributed to it outside Germany.

2. The principal point of the telegram received from the French Ambassador in Rome was to emphasise the extreme importance of avoiding the impression that the democratic countries were lining up against the dictator countries on grounds of difference in political philosophy. The French Ambassador reported that Italian opinion had been a good deal impressed by the vigour of the British reaction to events in Czecho-Slovakia, but had

been not less impressed by the danger to which this reaction, if uncontrolled, might quickly lead.

3. I told M. Bonnet that I was in complete agreement with him upon the point indicated in both sets of communications, namely, that we should do everything that we could to avoid exposing ourselves to a charge either of encirclement or of framing a line-up on ideological prejudice. The Prime Minister was answering a question in the House of Commons this afternoon¹ which would be directed to this particular point. It must, however, obviously be the purpose of those controlling the Government of dictator countries to represent reactions abroad in a light as unfavourable to their own peoples as possible.

4. From this M. Bonnet proceeded to speak about practical questions arising in regard to Franco-Italian differences. There had been, as I knew, approaches from the Italian side by persons claiming to be in Signor Mussolini's confidence. The French Ministers had not received these intermediaries direct, nor did M. Bonnet tell me, except in general terms, what kind of proposals they had made. It had been impossible for the French Government to risk exposing themselves to rebuff by responding to this very unofficial and non-committal method of approach. If Signor Mussolini was serious in his desire to reach accommodation with France, it was easy for him to find better and firmer means of ascertaining the French attitude. M. Bonnet did not anticipate, if I remember rightly, that the Italian claims would involve any territorial demands, and, provided that reasonable Italian claims could be reasonably advanced, he did not think French public opinion would be unduly difficult or intractable.

5. I said that from time to time we had considered whether there was anything possible that we could do officially in this matter, but that I had come to the conclusion that, if Signor Mussolini wished to assist a settlement, it would be because of the general pressure of events and that, unless there was this general pressure of events, I did not feel very confident that anything we could say or do would make any great difference. The opportunity might come later, but there was a certain danger at this moment, if we tried to come in to discussions of questions between France and Italy, that had not yet been formulated, of placing both the French Government and ourselves in a delicate and false position. With this M. Bonnet agreed.

6. Passing from this, M. Bonnet said that there was one subject on which he wished, if he might, to speak to me with complete frankness and the greatest earnestness. Yesterday the Prime Minister had drawn M. Bonnet's attention to the unsatisfactory state of development in French productive capacity in the matter of their air force.² The French Government were well aware of

¹ In reply to a question about the European situation, Mr. Chamberlain said 'I wish to make it clear, however, that there is no desire on the part of His Majesty's Government to stand in the way of any reasonable efforts on the part of Germany to expand her export trade. . . . Nor is this Government anxious to set up in Europe opposing blocks of countries with different ideas about the forms of their internal administration.' See *Parl. Deb.*, 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 1461-3.

² See No. 484.

how much their national effort on this side still left to be desired, and it was M. Bonnet's intention to convey to M. Daladier the offer made by the Prime Minister yesterday to help the French Government with technical advice based on our own experience as to how production difficulties could best be overcome. He thought this a very valuable proposal.

7. But, if the French Government must admit, as they did, very grave weakness in this regard, he also wished to draw my attention to the situation as they visualised it on land in any future war. Here was France, with a population of some 40 millions, called upon to face a potential threat of 80 millions in Germany and 40 millions in Italy. M. Bonnet developed the argument, which is familiar enough, with great vigour and conviction, from the angles both of the influence of this situation on French opinion and on opinion in Germany and Italy. If the people of France thought that it was impossible to look to Great Britain for any really substantial measure of military help for, say, eighteen months, the consequences might be profound and irretrievable. If, on the other hand, it could be presented to them that, after the outbreak of war, Great Britain would be in a position to give substantial military support at the end of, say, six or eight months, that would be a very much less unfavourable position.

8. This led M. Bonnet to urge, with all the persuasion that he could command, that this country should adopt in some form, whether direct conscription or otherwise, national service. He knew our difficulties—traditional, industrial, practical—and the effect that these must all exercise in the political sphere. Nevertheless, he permitted himself to remind me of what had been the march of events in France—M. Daladier's Government maintained in power by an immense preponderance of votes which securely represented public opinion, and a Government that had originally relied for its support upon parties and policies of the Left, now entrusted by general assent with complete powers enabling it to take whatever steps national safety seemed to dictate. It was surely an arresting example of how deeply democracy will respond to leadership if it believes itself in the face of danger. M. Bonnet earnestly hoped, as he was sure did the French Government, that the Prime Minister and His Majesty's Government in Great Britain might feel able to take an analogous course in regard to the steps necessary to reinforce our military strength.

9. I told M. Bonnet that I was, of course, deeply concerned by, as I was well aware of, all the considerations he had urged. I certainly had no doubt at all as to the effect that would be exerted, whether in France or in Germany, were His Majesty's Government in this country ever able to take the kind of action that he had outlined. I could also readily appreciate what was likely to be, perhaps to an increasing extent, the movement of French thought on this matter. On the other hand, he would know how real were the difficulties arising and how grave might be the repercussions on the whole strength and capacity of this country if they were rudely handled. I should, however, of course, place the Prime Minister and all my colleagues in very frank possession of what he had said.

10. The last matter to which M. Bonnet referred was the question of the return of our Ambassadors to Berlin, on which we had also spoken last night. The French Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin had expressed a clear view that he thought the sooner the Ambassador could be got back the better, by reason of the general advantage of personal contact and ambassadorial influence. I told M. Bonnet that I could appreciate these considerations, although I thought it was difficult to return our Ambassadors quite immediately, in view of the general approbation that had been accorded to our bringing them away as a mark of our censure of German action. M. Bonnet was, however, anxious that we should not drift into the position of having decided upon a punitive withdrawal. I said that when the appropriate time arrived no doubt some pretext for return could be found between us. I thought it, however, important that we should act together and, from our point of view, it had occurred to me that, if and when we wanted to send our Ambassador back, it might be easier for us to do this on the ground of the desirability of having him there to assist in the treatment of, and to bring pressure on behalf of, refugee questions.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 508

Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24)

No. 357 [C 3886/3556/18]

PARIS, March 23, 1939

His Majesty's Representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Paris telegram No. 125¹ has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding a proposed Four-Power Declaration.

¹ No. 491.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 508

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

PARIS, le 22 mars, 1939

Par sa note du 21 mars,¹ l'Ambassade d'Angleterre a bien voulu faire savoir au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères qu'en dépit des doutes existant au sujet de l'envoi d'un ultimatum du Reich à la Roumanie, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique estimait que la conquête récente de la Tchécoslovaquie par l'Allemagne pouvait être regardée comme la preuve d'une politique délibérée de domination et constituait à ce titre une menace pour chaque État européen. Dans ces conditions, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique estimait désirable d'organiser sans délai l'appui mutuel de tous

¹ Not printed. The text of this note followed the instructions sent to Paris on March 20. See No. 446.

les États qui comprennent la nécessité de protéger la société internationale contre de nouvelles violations des lois fondamentales sur lesquelles elle repose; il proposait à cet effet la publication par les Gouvernements britannique, polonais, soviétique et français, de la déclaration suivante:

‘Nous soussignés, dûment autorisés à cet effet, déclarons par le présent Acte que la paix et la sécurité en Europe étant une question d’intérêt et de préoccupation commune et cette paix et cette sécurité européennes pouvant être affectées par tout acte constituant une menace pour l’indépendance politique de tout État européen, nos Gouvernements respectifs s’engagent à se consulter immédiatement pour déterminer quelles mesures doivent être adoptées pour opposer une résistance commune à un tel acte.’

La publication de cette déclaration serait suivie d’un examen, par les signataires, de toute situation pour laquelle cet examen s’imposerait, en vue de déterminer la nature de l’action qui pourrait être adoptée.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l’honneur de faire savoir à l’Ambassade d’Angleterre que le Gouvernement de la République donne son entier assentiment à la proposition dont l’a saisi le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté.

CHAPTER VI

The announcement of the British guarantee to Poland. (March 24–April 3, 1939)

No. 509

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 24, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 213 *Telegraphic* [C 3907/3356/18]

ROME, March 24, 1939, 12.5 a.m.

My Hungarian colleague told the Counsellor yesterday that in his opinion, if Great Britain linked up with Soviet Russia on European security, she would be cutting her own throat as this would automatically indispose a large number of other countries who, whatever else they were, were violently anti-Soviet. He thought Poland would be included amongst these and that some of them would even prefer German domination to Russian assistance.

My Hungarian colleague may be prejudiced, but I feel there is considerable force in this view, especially as regards Italy, and I should have thought Spain and Yugoslavia. There are in fact indications here that reports of war appearing daily in the press and British and French efforts to form a democratic *bloc* against totalitarian States in association with Soviet Russia are affecting Italian opinion. Members of my staff tell me that Italians who were expressing themselves in unrestrained language about Germany a few days ago are beginning to talk bitterly about England associating herself with Soviets. It is also said that it was this factor which turned the scale at the meeting of the Grand Council and led to the resolution reported in my telegram No. 204.¹

A prominent Roman who has attended all recent official functions informed Counsellor at lunch today that if Great Britain entered into any arrangement with Soviet Russia, Italy would be lost to her for ever. He added that if Great Britain must come together with Moscow she ought to do it *sub rosa*. I personally think that this opinion represents what probably all Fascist and a great many moderate people who are patriotic Italians are thinking.

¹ Not printed. The resolution in question declared that 'what has happened in Central Europe finds its first origin in the Treaty of Versailles' and reaffirmed 'particularly at this moment' the 'full adherence' of Italy to the policy of the Rome-Berlin Axis.

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 24, 11.15 a.m.)

No. 173 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1591/30/59]

BERLIN, March 24, 1939

In comment on Sir Samuel Hoare's statement in the House¹ on German action in Memel, the 'Völkischer Beobachter' of March 23 writes that a term such as falsification of history would be much too mild for this deliberate deception practiced by a British Minister unless, as the paper is willing to admit, His Majesty's Government have once again been taken in by the intrigues of subordinate officials as in the case of Roumania. The statement itself, however, that the Reich Government presented the Lithuanian Foreign Minister with an ultimatum, is rejected as a straight lie.

Actually, it is said, M. Urbsys had expressed his desire months ago to call at the Wilhelmstrasse and he was received by Herr von Ribbentrop on his way back from a visit to Italy. Herr von Ribbentrop had very naturally availed himself of this opportunity to inform his visitor that the Reich could regard the return of the purely German Memelland to its German home as the only definite solution of the Memel question. He added that a swift and voluntary cession by Lithuania would without doubt be the best solution, for that would make it possible for the Reich to take into account Lithuania's economic interests in the port of Memel.

M. Urbsys had reported on Wednesday evening to his Government immediately after his return to Kovno and the Lithuanian Government had thereupon decided to settle the Memel question at once in the only sensible manner. These, the 'Völkischer Beobachter' says are the true facts and the fact that the Lithuanian Foreign Minister returned to Berlin on Thursday to conclude an agreement relating to the port of Memel, proves how right the decisions taken by the two Governments were.

It must be borne in mind, the paper adds, that the reunion of the Memelland with the Reich is nothing but an act of reparation for the act of force whereby German Memel was once torn from the Reich. The fact that the spokesman of the British Government is trying to interpret this act of justice and good sense as a fresh German act of force is all the more incredible in view of the British Government having at the time approved the Lithuanian raid without turning a hair.

This, however, the paper concludes, is just another example following the story of a German ultimatum to Roumania, proving the confusion into which British policy has drifted and proving that London is determined to oppose the Reich, politically and economically, wherever the opportunity for intrigue and sabotage offers.

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 1255.

No. 511

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 24, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 55 Telegraphic [C 3914/3356/18]

BELGRADE, March 24, 1939, 2.5 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 48¹ and 49².

Without prompting on my part Prince Regent yesterday gave me his views on the question of creating common front.

He was not disposed to accept entirely story of excessive zeal on the part of Roumanian Minister in London. He believes him to have been prompted originally by King Carol who His Royal Highness thinks will merely have earned a bad mark in Berlin without achieving any useful object.

His information from Warsaw is that Polish Government will in no circumstances commit themselves in advance to fight against Germany in hypothetical circumstances.

In general he thinks it would be a mistake for small Powers within reach of Germany's arm to join in any declaration which might have the effect of precipitating the very thing it was (intended to)³ avert. A firm declaration by the Great Powers would of course be an encouragement to the smaller Powers.

¹ No. 420.

² No. 426.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 512

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 135 Telegraphic [C 3665/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

My telegram to Budapest No. 9 and to Bucharest No. 53¹.

2. You should inform Italian Government of the instructions sent to His Majesty's Ministers at Budapest and Bucharest.

3. I am confident that the Italian Government, equally with ourselves, would wish to prevent any clash which might lead to a general conflagration. Knowing the friendly relations between the Italian Government and the two Governments concerned, I have thought it right to inform them of the step we are taking.

Repeated to Bucharest, Budapest, Warsaw and Paris.

¹ No. 502.

No. 513

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 24, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 177 *Telegraphic: by telephone* [N 1618/30/59]

BERLIN, March 24, 1939

Speaking to the Memellanders on March 23 at Memel Herr Hitler said that privation and misery had created a spirit of comradeship for Germans. He called upon his listeners to take an oath that this community should never again be broken and that no other Power in the world should ever break or bend it. He then said:

'The twenty years of suffering and misery will be a warning and a lesson to us for all time. What we have to expect from the outside world, we know. We do not intend to do harm to the outside world, but we had to repair the harm which it had done to us and I believe we have already in all essentials come to the end of this particular [*sic*] case of reparation.'

The last part of the above sentence is not contained in the official version of the text of the speech published in the press. It was heard however over the wireless and taken down in stenographic transcript. The words in German were:—'Und ich glaube wir sind schon im Wesentlichen am Abschluss dieser einzigen Wiedergutmachung angelangt.'

No. 514

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 142 *Telegraphic* [C 3598/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1939, 9.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 139.¹

1. Please inform State Department of the following for the confidential information of the President.

2. We have now received the final replies of the French and Soviet Governments to the proposals summarised in my telegram No. 136² and a preliminary indication of the Polish Government's views.

3. The Soviet reply³ expresses agreement and accepts the text of the proposed declaration which the Soviet Government will sign as soon as France and Poland have accepted. The Soviet Government are anxious that not only the Balkan but also the Baltic and Scandinavian countries should be invited to adhere after publication.

4. The French reply⁴ expresses entire assent. In conversation with the Prime Minister and myself in London⁵ M. Bonnet has however emphasised the importance of Polish participation and the difficulty of securing this in view of Soviet participation.

¹ No. 488.

² See No. 490.

³ See Nos. 458 and 484.

² Not printed. See No. 454, note 4.

⁴ See No. 508.

5. The Polish Foreign Minister informed His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw on March 21⁶ that the proposal demanded very serious consideration. His chief preoccupation was the suggested participation of the U.S.S.R. in view of which Polish participation would definitely range Poland in the Soviet camp against Germany. He has instructed the Polish Ambassador here to propose that His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government should enter into a secret agreement of consultation on the lines of the suggested declaration. (For your information: when communicating this to State Department you may think it advisable, in view of possible prejudicial effect on United States Government of term 'secret agreement', to paraphrase it by words 'should without informing other parties pledge themselves to consultation' etc.) This would not however prejudice any official decision regarding the declaration, on which he would communicate the views of his Government later. Nor would it affect the position of France, as the existing Franco-Polish Treaty already contains a consultative clause. His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw has suggested⁷ that publication with Poland's consent might be possible if Poland were assured that the Western Powers contemplated effective and immediate steps to resist German aggression.

6. The present difficulty is therefore to reconcile the Polish and Soviet positions.

7. Extensive mobilisation measures have been undertaken in Hungary and Roumania and although both Governments deny any aggressive intentions the position is dangerous. The Roumanian army now has approximately 450,000 men under arms. His Majesty's Government and the French Government are doing their best to urge moderation and demobilisation in Budapest and Bucharest⁸ and the Polish Government appear to be active in this direction. The Polish Government have received categorical assurances from the Hungarian Government that they have no bellicose intentions towards Roumania⁹ and the Hungarian military authorities have categorically stated that no negotiations are proceeding between the Hungarian and German Governments regarding the passage of German troops through Hungary.¹⁰

8. I informed the Turkish Ambassador generally of our proposals for a joint Four Power declaration on March 21.¹¹ Emphasising that he was speaking with full knowledge of the policy of the Turkish Government, Dr. Aras replied that they would be prepared to go to all lengths with Great Britain if assured of British support and of direct British assistance if they were themselves attacked in the Mediterranean. This attitude was unconditional regardless of the Polish and Russian replies. Apart from this Turkey would in all cases observe all her existing treaty obligations.

⁶ See No. 479.

⁷ See No. 489.

⁸ See No. 502.

⁹ Sir H. Kennard telegraphed this information on March 22 in Warsaw telegram No. 73.

¹⁰ Sir G. Knox telegraphed this information on March 23 in Budapest telegram No. 67.

¹¹ See No. 472.

No. 515

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 25, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 80 Telegraphic [C 4026/19/18]

WARSAW, March 24, 1939, 10.20 p.m.

Signature in rapid succession by Germany of one-sided treaties with Lithuania,¹ Slovakia,² and Roumania³ has made Polish public opinion indignant, alarmed, and at the same time defiant.

Independent and Opposition newspapers accuse Germany of seeking European domination and M. Beck of inexcusable short-sightedness. The well-known and reputable editor of 'Slovo' has been sent to a concentration camp for attacking Minister for Foreign Affairs. But Opposition parties have passed resolutions on need for national unity and even the semi-official 'Gazeta Polska' is beginning to take an anti-German tone.

There has been much criticism of M. Beck's policy in Parliament. I learn very confidentially that M. Witos, Peasant leader, has been allowed to return. Announcement will be made when modalities have been agreed upon.

Uneasiness has been increased by calling up of reservists (see my telegram No. 79⁴) and by coincidence of three days very thorough A.R.P. black outs in Warsaw.

¹ See No. 501.

² The Treaty of Protection between Germany and Slovakia was signed on March 23.

³ The Roumanian-German Trade Agreement was signed on March 23.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram of March 24 stated that, according to information received by His Majesty's Military Attaché, approximately 10,000 reservists and a certain number of specialists of several formations had been called up.

No. 516

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 104 [C 4002/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1939

Sir,

Having on the 21st instant outlined to the Turkish Ambassador¹ the line we were following with a view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression, I thought it would be as well to send for the Greek Minister and give him a similar account of how our minds were working. I explained, therefore, today to M. Simopoulos how matters had developed since we had made our original approach to the Greek Government and to the other members of the Balkan Entente² at the moment when we thought that Roumania was being threatened by something like an economic ultimatum on the part of Germany. Since then, although it had been subsequently

¹ See No. 472.

² See No. 390.

shown that Roumania was not under an immediate threat, His Majesty's Government had felt that the possibility of further German aggression in Eastern Europe was sufficiently real to make it necessary for them to consider the situation further, more particularly in so far as it affected the two countries who were bound to play an important part in any action intended to maintain the *status quo* in Eastern Europe, that is to say, Poland and Russia. We had accordingly addressed an enquiry³ to Warsaw and Moscow, asking these Governments whether they would be prepared to make a declaration of solidarity with us and the French. It was intended that such a declaration would form the basis on which further organisation could be built for safeguarding more particularly the Roumanian position, and it would be our intention at this stage to consult the other members of the Balkan Entente and invite their co-operation. Needless to say, such an organisation would not in any sense represent an attempt to 'encircle' Germany or to deprive her of her just rights.

2. Both the Soviet Government⁴ and the French Government⁵ had accepted the idea of a declaration such as we had proposed, but the Polish Government, who clearly were in a very delicate position, placed as they were between Germany on the one hand and Russia on the other, were still considering the situation and had not yet given us their final answer.

3. M. Simopoulos expressed himself as very grateful for being kept informed of the course of negotiations. As far as the position of Greece was concerned, he reiterated the statement⁶ made by the Greek Government last week, to the effect that Greece would carry out her obligations under the Balkan Entente, and if Roumania were attacked by Germany she would consider her position, which would be governed largely by the attitude adopted by Great Britain and France.

4. In the course of conversation reference was made both to the attitude of Bulgaria and to the position in Albania. As regards Bulgaria, M. Simopoulos was inclined, on the strength of assurances he had received from the Bulgarian Minister in London, to discount the rumours of Bulgarian troop concentrations in the Dobruja. He doubted whether the Bulgarian Government would be foolish enough at the present juncture to embark on an adventure against Roumania and thus bring down upon them the forces of the members of the Balkan Entente, who were obliged in such circumstances to come to Roumania's assistance.

5. As regards Albania, M. Simopoulos quoted from a telegram he had just received from his Government. On the one hand, there appeared to be movements of Yugoslav troops on the Albanian frontier, while, on the other hand, the King of Albania was reported to have taken a firm line with the Italian Minister and made it clear to him that, while he was prepared to carry out all treaty obligations with the Italian Government, he was not prepared to make any further concessions to Italian demands.

6. On my saying I was glad that Lord Lloyd, during his recent visit to

³ See No. 446.

⁵ See No. 508.

⁴ See No. 490.

⁶ See No. 439.

Athens,⁷ had been able to have satisfactory talks with the King and M. Metaxas, M. Simopoulos took the opportunity to point out how fortunate it was that during this critical period Greece should be enjoying such a strong and efficient Government, even though it be at the cost of certain curtailment of freedom of speech, instead of the country being torn in different directions by political agitation and intrigue in which outside influences might have been able to play a dangerous part.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

⁷ Lord Lloyd had been visiting south-eastern Europe for the British Council.

No. 517

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 280 [C 4084/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the United States Ambassador this evening, Mr. Kennedy proceeded to some general enquiry and conversation on the present political situation. His general impressions of such contacts as he had been able to establish during the last two or three days in this country, and in the light of impressions left on his mind by conversations with the United States Ambassador in Paris, had been roughly these. It seemed to him that considerable doubt emerged as to the willingness of Poland and Roumania to defend themselves against German encroachment or attack, and, in short, he seemed to detect some doubt in many quarters, firstly, as to whether those Governments were likely to mean business, and, further, whether His Majesty's Government and France really meant business. If we did not, the general effect of the statements made and the prospects advanced of resistance to German pressure during the last few days would be one of great disappointment.

2. I gave the Ambassador a general account of how the situation at present stood, and told him that, while it was undoubtedly the case that Poland felt very grave difficulty in associating herself openly with Russia, I none the less thought it probable that we should succeed in reaching an understanding with Poland which would have the effect of encouraging her to resist German aggression on herself, should such take place. I hoped that it would also be possible to bring Poland to the same conclusion in the event of an attack by Germany on Roumania and, I hoped, also elsewhere. We fully realised how much the attitude of other Powers, with whom we wished to concert action, depended upon the attitude of this country, and I could assure Mr. Kennedy that there was no danger of His Majesty's Government deluding themselves with the belief that bold words would suffice to hold the position if we were confronted with German threats of further acts of aggression. I promised to keep him closely informed.

3. Before he left, Mr. Kennedy, who evidently had been in receipt of information from M. Bonnet as to the conversation¹ that the Prime Minister and I had had with him two nights ago, asked whether the figures of our aircraft production, as given to M. Bonnet, namely about six hundred a month, were correct. He seemed to be somewhat surprised and gratified when I told him that they were.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See No. 484.

No. 518

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 155 [C 4086/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1939

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador called on me this afternoon at his own request to make the communication foreshadowed in your telegram No. 72¹ of the 22nd March about the attitude of the Polish Government towards the proposed international declaration.

2. Count Raczynski said he was afraid that the communication he had to make to me would rather complicate an already complicated situation, but it was dictated by the delicacy and even the danger of the situation in Eastern Europe, and by the necessity to avoid any action on Poland's part that might provoke an immediate hostile reaction on the part of Germany. He was instructed to propose that His Majesty's Government should consent, as an exceptional measure in view of the special circumstances, to the conclusion of a confidential bilateral understanding between the two countries by which the two Governments would undertake to act in accordance with the terms of the proposed declaration, as supplemented by the interpretation which I had given to the Ambassador at a previous conversation,² as regards, in particular, the question of Danzig.

3. Colonel Beck had, the Ambassador said, two reasons for making this suggestion. The first was that there would be less chance of leakage if the knowledge that some understanding had been concluded was confined to the two parties themselves. The second was that by this means the association of Poland with the Soviet Union in a public declaration could be avoided. As regards the second point Count Raczynski added that the relations between Poland and the Soviet Union were correct and the Polish Government did not wish them to deteriorate; but while it would improve the general situation if Poland were to strengthen her relations with Great Britain and France, any strengthening of Poland's relations with the Soviet Union might be regarded as the last straw by Herr Hitler and provoke a catastrophe. Colonel Beck did not wish to follow counsels of despair, and still hoped that peace might be preserved. For the moment, therefore, he would prefer to maintain the confidential character of the proposed bilateral understanding, though if the

¹ No. 485.

² See No. 471.

situation became very much worse it would, of course, be necessary to inform the French Government that it had been concluded. The conclusion of the proposed bilateral agreement would, as Colonel Beck saw it, secure that the two Governments should work in common and consult together on any question that might arise.

4. I said that it was important that there should be no doubt as to the meaning of Colonel Beck's proposal. As I understood it, he had suggested, for reasons which I appreciated arising out of Poland's geographical position, that there should be a gentleman's agreement or a firm understanding, confidential in character, between Great Britain and Poland that the two Governments would consult in the event of a threat to Poland's independence.

5. The Ambassador said that he thought the scope of the agreement would be somewhat wider than that. The proposal, as he understood it, was that His Majesty's Government should take into consideration the possibility of concluding a confidential bilateral understanding in the spirit of the proposed declaration; that is to say, that the two Governments would undertake to consult on all questions that might arise, not merely a threat to Poland's independence, but to that of Roumania or some other country. An arrangement of this kind would secure for Poland the help of Great Britain if, for example, the Danzig question should develop into a threat to Poland's independence. Poland, for her part, would be bound *vis-à-vis* Great Britain within the framework of the proposed declaration. The two countries would be bound by the declaration in the same measure as if they had signed it.

6. I said that the conclusion to be drawn from this seemed to me that Colonel Beck would be prepared to accept the obligations of the declaration and to take the action foreshadowed in it if a case arose. Did this mean that, while we should undertake to assist Poland in the event of a threat to Poland's independence, Poland in similar fashion would support Great Britain if she were the object of attack, or join Great Britain in the event of attack upon any other country?

7. The Ambassador said that, as he understood the position, Poland would count on Great Britain to support her in a case arising out of the Danzig question, while Poland would be bound to Great Britain in accordance with the terms of the declaration.

8. I said that this was not quite the same thing. What Colonel Beck was therefore suggesting was that there should be a confidential bilateral undertaking by Great Britain and Poland to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any action which constituted a threat to the political independence of any European State. This did not mean that there would be an undertaking as between Poland and Great Britain to go to each other's assistance if attacked. The Ambassador agreed. I said that it was important that there should be no dispute as to our meaning. I took it that Colonel Beck's idea was that, as a first stage, there should be a confidential bilateral acceptance of an obligation to consult. This would presumably be followed by a second stage, as the result of consultation, in which the two Governments would examine the question whether or not they

would take joint action in the event of an attack on Poland, Great Britain or any third State.

9. The Ambassador said he thought that Colonel Beck would expect that as soon as the proposed bilateral agreement had been concluded the two Governments would discuss together the various individual questions that might arise.

10. Count Raczynski repeated at this point some observations that he understood Colonel Beck had made to Your Excellency. Germany was accustomed to act with definite aims in a definite place by rapid action. It was therefore necessary to prepare definite methods of counter-action. The proposed declaration in itself would not be an adequate deterrent. While relations between Poland and Russia were normal, Colonel Beck was deeply convinced that the animosity between Moscow and Berlin was such that if Poland associated herself with the Soviet Union there would be a grave risk of a violent outbreak leading to a general conflict in a short time. Such a conflict would not be in the common interest of Poland, Great Britain or France. The Polish Government knew by experience that the German Government were ready to tolerate close relations between Poland and France; and it might well be that the strengthening of relations between Poland and Great Britain would not provoke anything more than press attacks in Germany. But a *rapprochement* between Poland and Russia might have disastrous results.

11. At this point, in order to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, I repeated to His Excellency the observation I had made to him about Danzig at our interview on the 21st March, namely that if Poland and Germany could settle the Danzig question by direct negotiations so much the better; but if the Danzig question should develop in such a way as to involve a threat to Polish independence, then this would be a matter of the gravest concern to ourselves. The same would be true in the case of a threat to the other countries, such as Roumania. I repeated that it would have to be a threat to Polish independence and not merely the outbreak of disturbances in Danzig. The Ambassador said he appreciated this and could assure me that Colonel Beck would go a long way to avoid trouble with Germany about Danzig.

12. The Ambassador enquired whether I thought I should be able to give him a reply before Colonel Beck left Warsaw for London. I told him that, apart from the larger question, one difficulty that his proposal raised was the confidential character of the proposed agreement, since this might create an awkward position between His Majesty's Government and the French Government.

13. The Ambassador said that Colonel Beck had quite appreciated this difficulty. As between France and Poland the proposed declaration would have added nothing, since the Franco-Polish Treaty of 1921 already contained a clause about consultation. As between France and Poland, therefore, the acceptance of the declaration was not necessary. The Ambassador emphasised the confidential character of the communication which he had just made to me.

14. He then went on to speak about relations between Hungary and Roumania. He told me that the Polish Government had continued to make representations both at Budapest and at Bucharest in the interests of peace. The Polish Government had received from the Roumanian Government an assurance that Roumania had no intention of attacking Hungary. On the strength of this the Polish Government had told the Hungarian Government quite frankly that, while it was true that the Polish Government had not thought that the action of the Hungarian Government in September and October last would have serious consequences, they now felt bound to say that if a conflict should break out in present circumstances between Roumania and Hungary they gravely feared that it would bring about a general conflagration.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 519

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 25, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 44 Telegraphic [N 1624/92/38]

MOSCOW, March 25, 1939, 1.45 a.m.

My telegram No. 43.¹

Following from Hudson for Secretary of State and the President of the Board of Trade.

I have now had three long meetings with Soviet delegation limited so far to exchange of views. M. Mikoyan² has been stiff and unforthcoming although the atmosphere has been at times almost hilarious. I have been conscious throughout of existence of strange suspicions. M. Mikoyan for instance apparently believed that the Board of Trade had deliberately formulated an agitation in England against the present trade agreement, amongst an hitherto docile and contented body of manufacturers and that this was in some obscure way connected with payment agreements concluded by us with Germany. This morning I think I succeeded in enlightening him on this point both by rehearsing the facts and by explaining that I am myself part of the Board of Trade as well as of the Foreign Office. I may be optimistic but I think that he showed later an increasing accessibility to the idea of doing business. It is possible however that politically he seems compliant, i.e. they may be preparing to make commercial concessions to us in the hope or in return for political advantage or alignment.

2. I told M. Potyomkin after lunch today that I had told M. Mikoyan that we should ourselves be prepared to sign a permanent commercial treaty with a settlement of all cognate outstanding questions. In this connexion I imagined they would like to get old standing questions of debts out of the

¹ No. 505.

² M. Mikoyan was People's Commissar for Foreign Trade.

way once and for all and made the purely personal suggestion that this difficult problem might be disposed of by allocating for this purpose Baring balances³ plus a further few millions which would be well worth the Soviet paying for political advantage of a complete regularization of our accounts for the future; I added that in this matter I expected proposals to come from the Soviet side. He said I should discuss the point with M. Litvinov and suggested the latter was expecting it.

3. I saw M. Litvinov tonight. After some talk he said that it was definitely desirable to get old standing questions of debts out of the way by a cancellation of Soviet claims on the United Kingdom and United Kingdom claims on the Soviet Union accompanied by the utilization of Baring balances for compensating British claimants.

4. I gave him to understand that if a satisfactory commercial agreement were reached some such settlement of debt question might be possible. When I suggested that a further sum might reasonably be added to the Baring funds he demurred on the ground that this would raise claims from other countries demanding equally favourable treatment. I left it that the question where supplementary funds should be made available should remain for discussion on forthcoming negotiations.

³ i.e. funds deposited with Messrs. Baring Brothers Bank by the Imperial Russian Government.

No. 520

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 25, 3.10 p.m.)

No. 186 Telegraphic [C 4041/54/18]

BERLIN, March 25, 1939, 2.50 p.m.

Military Attaché saw his Polish colleague last night who has just returned from Warsaw. He stressed the fact that the Polish Government had flatly turned down recent proposals made by Germans through the Polish Ambassador, Berlin, that Poland should join anti-Comintern Pact. He had no definite information of any German military measures which might appear to be preparatory to military action against Poland.

Polish Military Attaché added that it was obviously necessary for the Polish Government to observe the greatest caution *vis-à-vis* Germany, and that this naturally applied especially to the case of Danzig which was most complicated and differed fundamentally from the general question of the Corridor. Should the Germans make demands for the return of any or all of the Corridor either separately or together with demands regarding Danzig, Poland would certainly resist them to the point of meeting any act of aggression by force.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 521

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 25, 3.10 p.m.)

No. 185 Telegraphic [C 4040/13/18]

BERLIN, March 25, 1939, 2.55 p.m.

The Military Attaché made enquiries at the War Office yesterday regarding military measures now in progress with particular reference to territories affected by recent operations. He also enquired whether export of completed foreign orders placed with Czech armament firms prior to German occupation would continue. The War Ministry informed him that in the case of Memel only a few troops from the normal garrison of East Prussia were employed. As regards Czecho-Slovakia and his other questions it was maintained that they were of a political nature and rather for reply by German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

War Ministry reaffirmed that prohibited area proclaimed on March 15¹ was only a temporary measure but would not give even an approximate date for probable cancellation. Please inform the War Office.

¹ See No. 285.

No. 522

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 25, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 187 Telegraphic [C 4042/3356/18]

BERLIN, March 25, 1939, 6.45 p.m.

Following from the Military Attaché for Director of Military Operations and Intelligence.

As a result of observations and contacts since my return here I submit the following very broad appreciation from the *local army angle* assuming grouping of forces involved unchanged.

Germany risks defeat only if confronted by two-front war and blockade. Such blockade can only be *rapidly* effective if Germany's eastern front is on or close to her present frontiers and if she has to fight to gain and hold resources essential to her powers of resistance. If she can tap these resources without having to fight and hold, and if she has no eastern front, or only a Russia acting on the defensive with which to contend, she will virtually be in the position of fighting a one-front war. At the present moment her ability to fight a two-front war on land involving fighting for and holding essential economic areas is doubtful. But in two or three years' time she may well be able to do so. Furthermore unless the countries on her eastern border are certain that we will permit no further German aggression in the form either of military action or of economic agreements secured by threats these

countries will almost inevitably slide into Germany's camp and our eastern front—(? under the circumstances)¹ a purely defensive Russia—disappears. Regarded *purely from the point of view of the German army* I consider that provided we can now secure the eastern front that we desire the present would be the most unfavourable moment for them becoming involved in general hostilities.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

No. 523

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 25, 8.5 p.m.)

No. 83 Telegraphic [C 4055/92/55]

WARSAW, March 25, 1939, 7.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 82.¹

The calling up of reservists has, I believe, gone considerably beyond the numbers mentioned in my telegram No. 79.² A competent authority put numbers under arms at 750,000. This, coupled with the precautionary measures mentioned in Danzig telegram No. 7,³ suggests the thought that M. Beck intends to start discussing about Danzig at the moment chosen by himself, possibly on the way to or from London. He would thus be in a stronger position both diplomatically and militarily than if he waited until Herr Hitler or the Danzig Senate chose to make the move.

I was much struck by statements made both by M. Beck and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs (my telegrams Nos. 74⁴ and 82) that the Danzig question must be discussed *soon*.

I do not share the alarmist views of some of my colleagues that the Polish Government intends to force an issue with Germany. But the Poles understand German methods and this would not be the first time they have taken a leaf out of the German book.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 524.

² Not printed.

³ Not printed. See No. 515, note 4.

⁴ No. 486.

No. 524

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 26, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 82 Telegraphic [C 4054/92/55]

WARSAW, March 25, 1939, 7.40 p.m.

Danzig telegram No. 29.¹

Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs in conversation today agreed that menacing language used by Germans in Danzig might aim at intimidating Poland just when she was considering British proposal for consultation. While there

¹ Not printed.

appeared to be no reason to expect any German *coup* there he personally felt that the Danzig question must come up for discussion with Germany in some form or other before Easter.

2. I said that there appeared to me to be three alternatives: 1. A declaration by Danzig Senate (? on their)² own initiative for union with the Reich without any overt support from the Reich; 2. Military or other measures by the Reich in support of such a decision of the Senate; 3. A demand by Germany for incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and a corridor across Corridor coupled with a threat of military action.

3. Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs said that any German ultimatum or any encroachment on Corridor would of course mean war but that the first alternative I had mentioned was a doubtful one. Public opinion here at present was bellicose and prepared to support the Government in any defence of vital interests. If the Polish Government made concessions over Danzig a spirit of defeatism with all its lamentable consequences might conceivably result.

4. He mentioned that he had had to attend a discussion on foreign affairs in Parliament yesterday where he had been badly heckled. He felt generally that M. Beck was in an extremely difficult position. He had of course to make every effort to avoid a situation which might entail war but on the other hand he had to take into consideration the degree of feeling which had been aroused in Poland by recent events on both her southern and northern frontiers.

My Military Attaché is visiting Danzig today and will give the gist of this telegram to the Consul-General. Although no hint of it has been given here I must add it is not inconceivable that M. Beck might attempt to extricate himself from his difficulties by placing the responsibility for Danzig on the shoulders of the League of Nations and especially His Majesty's Government as *rapporteur*.

Repeated to Berlin.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 525

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 26, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 219 Telegraphic [C 3858/15/18]

ROME, March 25, 1939, 10.50 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

Personal and Confidential.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Signor Mussolini had received the Prime Minister's letter¹ and much appreciated Mr. Chamberlain's action in writing to him. The letter, Count Ciano continued, contained certain suggestions which Signor Mussolini was turning over in his mind and he would answer as soon as he had had time to think out a reply.

¹ No. 448.

No. 526

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 37 Telegraphic [C 4155/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 25, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 42.¹

1. The Soviet Ambassador was informed on March 23² that His Majesty's Government appreciated the prompt reply given by the Soviet Government to their enquiry about the declaration. M. Maisky said Soviet Government would not now be giving anything to the press.

2. In reply to question M. Maisky was told that no final answer had come from Poland and it was easy to understand that the Polish Government should feel themselves in a difficult position. It was natural that they should hesitate to commit themselves at this time to joining openly a *bloc* obviously designed for resistance to German expansion. Their hesitation was increased by the reflection that if the *bloc* included the Soviet Government that would expose them all the more to German indignation.

3. The Ambassador enquired whether His Majesty's Government would get into touch with other Powers if the declaration was secured. He thought it would be advisable to obtain the co-operation of as many countries as possible. He was told that this would doubtless be considered in the course of the exchanges of views which would follow on the declaration but it might be well to start with certain countries who appeared to be more directly in the road of the German advance and who were already organised in some treaty arrangements. It was not enough to collect an impressive list of countries. It was also necessary to weigh the advantage of the rather slight military assistance they could offer as against the disadvantage that this procedure would help Germany to convince her people that they were being surrounded and marked down as the victims of aggression.

Repeated to Warsaw and Paris.

¹ No. 490.

² For a fuller account of this conversation, see No. 552.

No. 527

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)

No. 27 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4044/15/18]

BRUSSELS, *March 25, 1939*

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to call this morning. He said he had disquieting news of a growing spirit of defeatism in Holland and even in Switzerland, and that the Dutch and Swiss were asked [*sic* ? asking] what would England and France do to help them. Had I any information? I said that as to Switzerland, that was more immediately the concern of France. As to Holland, His Excellency had seen that His Majesty's Government would

consider an attack on Holland as a *casus belli*,¹ and I asked whether Belgian Government were taking any measures to meet the danger arising out of an attack on Holland. He said measures were being considered to meet the danger of a sudden attack along the Belgian coast. I asked if anything had been said to the French Government about this. He said: No. I drew his attention to an article in the Socialist paper 'Peuple' this morning advocating conversations with the French and British. Although careful not to commit himself he seemed to share the views expressed in the article. He could not believe that if Germany seized Holland they would not attack France through Belgium. I said that if that was view of Belgian Government they could hardly count on French support without previous consultation, and it was very unlikely that French would take the initiative in this.

Copy to The Hague.

¹ See No. 98.

No. 528

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 45 Telegraphic [C 4045/3356/18]

MOSCOW, March 26, 1939, 2.35 a.m.

My telegram No. 42.¹

M. Litvinov told me that the Polish Ambassador called on him yesterday to ask whether it was true—as reported by the Polish Ambassador in communication with London—that the Soviet Government has been invited by the British Government to sign proposed Anglo-French-Soviet declaration and had expressed readiness to do so on condition that Poland was included amongst the signatories. M. Litvinov replied by giving him the facts and stressing that the whole initiative had been British, . . .² that Poland had always been included in proposal.

2. M. Litvinov is quietly awaiting further news of our intentions and is naturally inclined to feel a certain satisfaction at being able to claim that the course of events justifies his argument that a Conference of all interested Powers great and small is the sole practical method of dealing with the situation.

3. Meanwhile he does not conceal from me his suspicion that His Majesty's Government have not at heart the abandonment of a policy of giving way before German aggression. He twice mentioned Prime Minister's statement that His Majesty's Government would not oppose German economic advance in South-east Europe³ as the example of the sort of argument used for so long to cover up what Soviet press calls capitulation.

4. Soviet caution is shown by the fact that Hudson's mission though proceeding in most friendly atmosphere and accorded lavish hospitality is not

¹ No. 490.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ The reference is presumably to Mr. Chamberlain's reply to a question in the House of Commons on March 23. See No. 507, note 1.

'featured in' by [*sic*] the press in any way. On the other hand there has been during week or so comparative absence of usual press sneers at our capitulating policy.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 529

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 55 Telegraphic [C 3803/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 26, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

The Polish Ambassador called on March 21 and, after explaining that he was acting without specific instructions, said that his Government were anxious about relations between Hungary and Roumania and that the Polish Ambassador at Bucharest had been instructed to concert with his British colleague in exercising a pacifying influence.¹

2. The Ambassador stated that French Foreign Minister had been informed on Colonel Beck's instructions that the Polish-Roumanian Alliance and the accompanying military arrangements applied only to an attack by Russia and that Polish Government saw difficulty in discussing this question through Paris since it had not been raised by the Roumanian Government themselves. The Ambassador, however, gave it to me as his personal opinion that there was a 99 per cent. chance that any German attack upon Roumania would necessarily involve Poland.

3. I informed His Excellency of the instructions in my telegram to you No. 43.² He personally warmly welcomed the proposal while stressing Poland's difficult position. The Polish Government had in the past had doubts about the British and French attitude and were afraid of being left in isolation but it was clear to him that the attitude of His Majesty's Government and the British people differed from their attitude during the Czecho-Slovak crisis last autumn.

4. I suggested to His Excellency that further possibilities might be discussed if the declaration proposed in my telegram No. 43 could be concluded quickly. For example, our view as regards Danzig might be that, if this question could be settled by direct negotiations between Poland and Germany, so much the better, but if the question should develop in such a way as to threaten Polish independence, then I thought that His Majesty's Government would have to treat it as a question which was of the gravest concern to themselves.

5. The Ambassador called on me again on March 24³ to develop the proposal for a confidential bilateral understanding between Great Britain and Poland foreshadowed in your telegram No. 72⁴. He asked whether I

¹ An account of this conversation of March 21 was sent in a despatch addressed to Sir H. Kennard on that date. See No. 471.

² No. 446.

³ For a fuller account of this conversation, see No. 518.

⁴ No. 485.

should be able to give him a reply before Colonel Beck left for London. I replied that, apart from the larger question, one difficulty was the confidential character of the proposed agreement since this might create an awkward position between His Majesty's Government and the French Government. I had gathered from the Ambassador that Colonel Beck's idea was that the existence of the agreement should not be disclosed to the French Government.

No. 530

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 75 Telegraphic [C 4091/3356/18]

BUDAPEST, March 26, 1939, 11.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 73,¹ last paragraph.

No responsible official being available at Ministry for Foreign Affairs over the week-end I have enquired from Roumanian Legation who tell me that the Ministry [*sic*] of Foreign Affairs yesterday handed to the Roumanian Minister a Note stating that the Hungarian Government would revoke recent military measures, twenty-four hours after the Roumanians had begun to do the same.

As the Roumanian Minister was leaving Count Csaky said that he would arrange for the Hungarian General Staff to begin demobilization at once.

Roumanian Legation have evidence that the Hungarian Government have been . . .² by the German Government and that the Note is merely for face saving.

Repeated to Bucharest and Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. In the last paragraph of this telegram of March 24, Sir G. Knox reported that the Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had promised to let him know the result of an interview with the Roumanian Minister on March 25.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 531

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 27, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 47 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1649/92/38]

MOSCOW, March 27, 1939

Following from Mr. Hudson.

I asked M. Mikoyan yesterday definitely whether after our exploratory conversations he was prepared to open negotiations for a durable agreement. He said though he doubted from our conversations whether negotiations owing to [*sic* ? over] our demands would be successful he was personally prepared to agree but must consult his colleagues. He promised me an answer at lunch today. He and M. Litvinov have just agreed to the continuance in London of trade discussions. I am to see M. Molotov at 5.0 p.m. and His Majesty's Ambassador thinks that M. Stalin may be present as well as M. Mikoyan. From draft of press communiqué which M. Litvinov has mentioned we

gather that some political questions may be raised by M. Molotov and that on them may depend formal agreement to trade negotiations. Paragraph proposed by M. Litvinov appears at first sight harmless but we shall have to examine it carefully. I will of course telegraph again later today but think it wiser to let you know this at once as if things go well you may well see press communiqué before my next telegram is decyphered.

No. 532

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 32¹ Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1649/92/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 27, 1939, 4.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 47.²

While nature of press communiqué is not clear to me, it is most desirable that there should be no mention of any political questions therein.

¹ This should read 'No. 38'. The telegram was numbered 32 in error.

² No. 531.

No. 533

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 27, 4.30 p.m.)

No. 48 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 1652/92/38]

MOSCOW, March 27, 1939

My telegram No. 47.¹

Following from Hudson:—

We saw Molotov, Litvinov and Mikoyan at 5 p.m. They handed us text of Tass communiqué recorded in my immediately following telegram² and, as first two paragraphs gave us what we required namely a promise of further negotiations in London, [and] last two paragraphs appeared harmless, we agreed to it. It will be released at midnight, Moscow time, and we promised that no earlier statement would be issued in London.

2. As stated in my telegram of March 25³ discussions have been full and representative, but I have scrupulously avoided any threats of the denunciation of the agreement. Economic results to both countries . . .⁴ were however fully explored and I left M. Mikoyan under no illusion as to the nature of our demands.

3. In view of chagrined [*sic* ? changed] circumstances since I left London I refrained from raising the question of date of discussions in London. Acting on a hint I invited M. Mikoyan to come to London for discussions but he pleaded pressure of business in Moscow though invitation appeared to please him.

¹ No. 531.

² No. 545. For the text of the communiqué (which was not included in No. 545) see No. 593, enclosure.

³ No. 519.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 534

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 84 Telegraphic [C 4210/54/18]

WARSAW, March 27, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

I asked German Ambassador this morning whether either German or Polish Government had raised Danzig question in Berlin or Warsaw or were likely to do so in the immediate future in view of rumours reported in my telegram No. 83.¹ His Excellency said that while no special step had been taken on either side the Danzig question was in continual discussion and efforts were being made to bridge the gap between extreme German demands (my telegram No. 15 Saving²) and Polish objections. He begged me to believe that in his personal opinion we need not expect any German *coup* as regards Danzig. It was true sooner or later this question would have to be settled, he hoped amicably, but he admitted present moment would not be chosen for negotiations of a far reaching nature. He evidently thought Poland would not make occupation of Danzig a *casus belli* though he realized that any demand regarding Corridor would be.

He agreed that in the present state of tension it would perhaps be better to leave matters as they are for the moment. He seemed to think that M. Beck was going to London primarily to secure our agreement to the High Commissioner staying in Danzig so that there should not be a vacuum.

When Ambassador questioned me about the Four-Power declaration I naturally was evasive. He seemed to feel that Poland would not under any circumstances have anything to do with it any more than they would with the anti-Comintern Pact.

He said that there was as far as he knew no foundation for report that there had been a serious collision between German and Polish troops in Bogumin area last week.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 523.

² No. 144.

No. 535

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 86 Telegraphic [C 4199/54/18]

WARSAW, March 27, 1939, 8.56 p.m.

My telegram No. 84.¹

M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet today told the Counsellor that he did not expect any special tension regarding Danzig in the next few days such as might prevent M. Beck's visit to London.

¹ No. 534.

Discussions about Danzig would continue as they had at intervals during the past two years. He hoped that Germany now realized that Poland would fight if Danzig were made subject of an ultimatum. Polish Government could not agree to re-militarisation of Free State. Polish military precautions which he described as important were meant to impress Germany.

Polish Ambassador in Berlin had seen Herr von Ribbentrop yesterday but had only mentioned Danzig incidentally.

Crux of the problem in my view is that Polish public opinion is unprepared for even reasonable (? concessions)² over Danzig and that army probably takes the same die-hard attitude.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 536

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 87 Telegraphic [C 4200/92/55]

WARSAW, March 27, 1939, 8.57 p.m.

My telegram No. 83.¹

Military Attaché visited Danzig and Gdynia by car on March 25 and 26. He reports considerable decrease of tension in Danzig.

There were no signs of unusual military activity in the northern part of the Corridor nor on the route taken, which did not of course touch the western frontier, was there any sign of unusual military or semi-military transport. Deputy Chief of Staff stated this morning that certain formations had been reinforced by reservists and specialists from various classes but that no one class had been called up in its entirety. (This does not however imply that total number called up does not exceed a single class.) He denied that a total of 750,000 men had been reached.

Military Attaché considers that present total is unlikely to exceed half a million men. Forces on the western and East Prussian frontiers have clearly been strengthened and the fact that specialists of various classes have been called up has lent force to circumstantial rumours current here.

Please inform the War Office.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 523.

No. 537

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 105 Telegraphic [C 4206/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 27, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

As you will see from the record of the conversation which the Prime Minister and I had with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs on March

23,¹ the two Governments reached general agreement on the best course of action to adopt in view of the reluctance of the Polish Government to accept the proposed Four-Power declaration of consultation.

2. The draft instructions contained in my telegrams to Warsaw No. 56² and to Bucharest No. 65² have been prepared in the light of our discussions with M. Bonnet. You should give him a copy of those instructions and enquire whether he would be disposed to send similar instructions to the French Ambassadors at Warsaw and Bucharest. It is important that the British and French representatives at each capital should consult each other before taking action, and that they should act at about the same time.

3. You will see from my telegram under reference that it is contemplated that the Soviet Government, while not associated directly with the proposed arrangements, should be kept in touch with developments and invited to undertake to lend their assistance in certain circumstances in the most convenient form. I hope that the French Government would [*sic*] cooperate with us in endeavouring to secure this from the Soviet Government.

4. It is of the first importance that the character of the approach which His Majesty's Government and the French Government are making in Warsaw and Bucharest, and the communications which may follow it, should be kept secret, since any premature disclosure would jeopardise their success.

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest and Moscow.

¹ The reference appears to be to the conversation held on March 22. See No. 484. No record of a further conversation between Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and M. Bonnet on March 23 has been traced in the Foreign Office archives. For a conversation of March 23 between Lord Halifax and M. Bonnet, see No. 507.

² No. 538.

No. 538

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*

No. 56¹ Telegraphic [C 4207/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 27, 1939, 11.30 p.m.*

(No action should be taken on the present telegram pending further instructions.)

1. My enquiries in the various capitals concerned have shown that it will not be possible to proceed without modification with the proposed Four-Power Declaration. While the French Government have accepted the proposal, and while the Soviet Government have accepted, subject to acceptance by France and Poland, the Polish Government are reluctant, for reasons which I appreciate, to associate themselves with the Soviet Union in a public declaration of this kind.

2. His Majesty's Government have been in close and confidential consultation with the Polish Government on this subject, and although possible variants of the original scheme have been discussed, it is becoming clear that

¹ No. 56 to Warsaw, No. 65 to Bucharest.

our attempts to consolidate the situation will be frustrated if the Soviet Union is openly associated with the initiation of the scheme. Recent telegrams from a number of His Majesty's Missions abroad have warned us that the inclusion of Russia would not only jeopardise the success of our constructive effort, but also tend to consolidate the relations of the parties to the Anti-Comintern Pact, as well as excite anxiety among a number of friendly Governments.

3. It is evident, therefore, that some alternative method of approach must be sought. In any scheme, the inclusion of Poland is vital as the one strong Power bordering on Germany in the East, and the inclusion of Roumania is also of the first importance, since Roumania may be the State primarily menaced by Germany's plans for Eastern expansion.

4. His Majesty's Government have, therefore, decided to make an approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments in the following sense. The French Government have agreed to make a corresponding approach.

(a) Germany may either directly attack Poland or Roumania, or may undermine either country's independence, whether by processes of economic penetration or national disintegration, as in the case of Czecho-Slovakia, or by indirect military pressure, which, in the case of Roumania, might take the form of Hungarian troop concentrations. Are Poland and Roumania respectively prepared actively to resist if their own independence is threatened in any of these ways?

(b) If so, Great Britain and France would be prepared to come to the help of the threatened State. It would be understood that, as a counterpart for the undertaking by Great Britain and France to support Poland and Roumania, Poland and Roumania would keep Great Britain and France fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening their independence;

(c) The assurance offered in (b) is dependent upon Poland coming to the help of Roumania, if the latter is the State threatened. We should wish to know whether Roumania would be prepared to come to the help of Poland if the latter were the State threatened.

(d) (The present section (d) of the communication is to be made to the Polish Government only, since Poland, unlike Roumania, has a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with France, and is a stronger military power than Roumania.) The undertaking given by Great Britain and France² under (b) would be given as part of a reciprocal arrangement by which if Great Britain or France were attacked by Germany, or if they went to war with Germany to resist German aggression anywhere in Western Europe or Yugoslavia, Poland would come to their help.

5. If the position of Poland and Roumania can be consolidated, Turkey and Greece could more easily be rallied to the common cause and would be more likely to be able to make an effective contribution.

6. It is important that the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be made aware of the manner in which we would propose to deal with the Soviet difficulty. It is desirable to preserve the interest of the Soviet Union in this scheme. The intention would be, at some convenient moment in the

² The words 'to Poland' were later inserted at this point. See No. 559.

discussions, to explain to the Soviet Government that it was proposed in the first place to proceed with the Governments of the two countries nearer to Germany and most likely to be affected by the potential danger of the situation. In the event of an attack on Poland or Roumania there would be good reasons on the merits of the case for trying to secure some measure of Soviet participation. I believe that even the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet Union would be to the advantage of these two countries in case of war, and that they might indeed be grateful in an emergency to have at their disposal such war material as Soviet industry would be in a position to furnish. I am disposed in the first place to ascertain the view of the Soviet Government as to their likely attitude to this proposal. It is important not to reinforce their tendency towards isolation and I propose to consider in due course how best to retain their close interest which is, after all, to their own general advantage.

7. It is essential of course that the present approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be kept secret, as well as any negotiations that may follow it. Once, however, agreement had been secured, it would be necessary, for constitutional reasons, that some statement should be made in Parliament. His Majesty's Government would at any rate have to state in public the assurances which they had given to the Polish and Roumanian Governments. It is possible that the Polish Government might be reluctant to agree to make public such counter-assurances as they would have given to us, but His Majesty's Government would certainly be pressed to say whether any such counter-assurances had been given and they would very much hope to be in a position to announce the fact.

8. Your French colleague will receive similar instructions and you should, after consulting him, speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of the present telegram. You should not leave with him any statement in writing.

Repeated to Paris and Moscow.

No. 539

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 7 Saving: Telegraphic¹ [N 1658/30/59]

KOVNO, March 27, 1939

Following is the gist of a conversation I had on March 25 with the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. In his account of the conversation he had on March 20 with Herr von Ribbentrop the Minister for Foreign Affairs had little to add to what the Secretary-General told me on March 21² except that the latter, in his nervousness, omitted to inform me that Herr von Ribbentrop had promised Lithuania port facilities at Memel.

3. The Minister for Foreign Affairs made me promise not to mention to anybody except His Majesty's Government his account of the threatening

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 7 Saving and was repeated as No. 18 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 28 at 9.30 a.m.

² See No. 480.

methods adopted by Herr von Ribbentrop as he was fearful of what might happen were the Government of the Reich to learn that he had spoken the truth about an attitude which, having gained their point, the Reich now seemed anxious to conceal.

4. His Excellency tried to convince me (although I thought with his tongue in his cheek) that Article 4 of the Treaty of March 22³ would only tend to strengthen 'neutrality' which would be the Lithuanian policy in the event of war. His Excellency added that Lithuania already had a non-aggression pact with Russia and that he thought the picture might be completed by the conclusion with Poland of a treaty similar to that.

5. In the economic field the Minister for Foreign Affairs assured me that no demands had been made by Herr von Ribbentrop. I told him that I feared that these were yet to come and would no doubt be formulated during the negotiations foreseen under Article 3 of the Treaty and the annex. In saying this I had in mind President Smetona's remarks to me on January 19 (*vide* my Saving telegram No. 2⁴).

6. Speaking of internal situation the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that the decision of Seimas to accept the German ultimatum had been by no means unanimous. His Excellency characterized the attitude of the Lithuanian people in general as one of determination to resist by force any further encroachment on their territory or independence.

7. My own considered views of the present situation are as follows.

8. The Lithuanian policy, so long as there is a Government capable of pursuing an independent one, will be to preserve neutrality at all cost, defending herself against all aggressors no matter from what direction.

9. In reports [*sic*] of Polish struggle for supremacy in Lithuania the Germans, by the occupation of Memel and (perhaps theoretically) by Article 4 (particularly the last sentence) of the Agreement of March 22, have stolen a big march on their opponents and if I am not mistaken they will have no difficulty by propaganda and intimidation in still further consolidating their already strong position. Reports have already been reaching me of disseminating by German agents of anti-Polish propaganda.

10. Indeed it would seem that the knell has been sounded to Poland's political aspirations in Lithuania and that from now onwards German and Polish struggle here may take the form of a race in which the Germans have already established a valuable if not a winning lead for strategical positions. The Polish Minister who is admittedly extremely nervous told me today that he considered this stage of the struggle had already been reached and that it was now too late for Poland to think of concluding a non-aggression pact with Lithuania. Speaking unofficially he added that it would not be Poland's fault, seeing that no Polish-Lithuanian frontier had yet been fixed, were Polish troops suddenly to find themselves on Lithuanian territory.

11. There has been some talk at Kovno of Russian assistance in the event of a war; but I think that the consensus of opinion is that to ask Russia for assistance would be like asking the devil for help against the devil. Whilst

³ For the text of this Treaty see No. 501.

⁴ Not printed.

help in technical personnel and materials may be acceptable it is feared that any passage of Russian troops might result in local communist risings and the inevitable massacre of the bourgeoisie.

Repeated to Berlin and Foreign Office No. 18.

No. 540

Viscount Halifax to Mr. R. I. Campbell (Paris)

No. 727 [C 4152/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 27, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 25th March and enquired whether the latter had any further news to give him in regard to our negotiations with the Polish Government.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan told M. Corbin that the Polish Ambassador had called on the Secretary of State on the 24th March¹ to deliver a message from M. Beck. Even if this message was not to be regarded as the final reply of the Polish Government (for Count Raczynski had made some reference to a continuance of the discussion with M. Beck when he comes to London), it seemed pretty clear that the attitude of the Polish Government would be that they could not be associated in any joint declaration with the Soviet Government.

3. M. Corbin asked whether we had the impression that the Polish Government wished us to give some more binding and effective guarantee than would be afforded by the declaration. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that, so far as he remembered, the Polish Government had not asked for this, though he presumed that they would be quite happy to receive it.

4. M. Corbin asked whether we had any information to show that the Polish and German Governments were now discussing some new arrangement regarding Danzig. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that, so far as he knew, we had no definite indication to that effect. M. Corbin said that his Government thought that it was likely that something of the kind was being discussed and that M. Beck was trying to use as a lever with the Germans the possibility of some Franco-British guarantee of Poland.

5. M. Corbin then enquired whether His Majesty's Government had been able to form any definite opinion as to the scope and effect of the German-Roumanian Agreement and whether the Roumanian Government had furnished us with any explanation. Sir Alexander Cadogan told him of what the Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires had told him on the 24th March,² but he added that we had not yet had time to subject the Agreement to a detailed examination, nor, indeed, could we be sure that the terms of that Agreement

¹ See No. 518.

² The Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires had called to give Sir A. Cadogan some explanations regarding the new Economic Agreement. He said that it was untrue that Roumania had signed away her economic independence. The Agreement was not directed against any third parties, and contained no political clauses. The Roumanian Government were determined to defend their territorial integrity and their political and economic independence.

as published would reveal the real state of affairs. In reply to Sir Alexander Cadogan's question, M. Florescu had told him that he knew nothing of any annex to the Treaty, such as was alleged by certain organs of the press to be in existence.

6. M. Corbin said that, in any event, his Government would not take the attitude that the Agreement had altered the independent status of Roumania or lessened French interest in contributing to the maintenance of that status.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 541

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 116 [C 3876/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 27, 1939*

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 23rd March and handed to him the annexed memorandum, which he explained was a hasty translation which he had made of a communication received from his Government dated the 20th March. His Government were communicating it officially to the French and United States Governments, as well as to His Majesty's Government.

2. M. Tilea added, as a personal observation, that, although his Government might hesitate to be associated with the Soviet in any pact formed in peace time to oppose resistance to German expansion, he was convinced that, if war were to break out, they would be only too glad to accept Soviet assistance in one form or another.

3. With reference to point (5) of the annexed memorandum, he emphasised again the urgent need for a loan to the Roumanian Government, but he gave me to understand that the Roumanian Military Attaché was in touch with our Service Departments, who were aware of detailed Roumanian requirements in the matter of war material, and who had said that they could supply a certain quantity of them. The principal obstacle lay in finance.

4. M. Tilea said that he was leaving that night for Bucharest, where he hoped to arrive on the 25th March. He thought he would stay there for one or two days and might accordingly be back in London on Thursday of the following week.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 541

Memorandum communicated by the Roumanian Minister

March 20, 1939

The official point of view of the Roumanian Government regarding its policy in these days of general anxiety can be stated as follows:—

(1) Roumania is determined to defend her boundaries and independence, and in the event of any attack upon our boundaries we would defend ourselves by arms.

(2) The danger without being imminent for us is not excluded. We have general motives of anxiety, and we have information about exceptional concentration of army forces (German troops in Slovakia, Hungarian troops at our boundaries) which concern us directly. On the other hand, the method of unexpected injunctions and brusque attacks is well known. Roumania has already made some military preparations so as not to be surprised by events.

(3) Roumania has, and is avoiding a policy towards Germany which could be taken as a provocation. Any action in this sense would hasten the political and military rhythm of Germany's action and would precipitate events which would find us, as well as the Western Powers, in unfavourably and incompletely defended positions. Then we do not believe in the opportunity of a pact of mutual assistance.

(4) But we believe that for us, as well as for the general European situation, it is necessary that all the big Western Powers, on their own initiative, should make it clear in a very precise form that they do not admit new changes in their boundaries and in the situation in Europe and that they are determined to help us with all their military force to defend our frontiers. Such a guarantee is in the benefit of all those who want to keep an elementary safety in the European situation.

(5) In view of the above, we would like to make it known that, should our resistance and the value of our frontiers be as effective as possible, it is necessary that Roumania should be helped as quickly and completely as possible in its aid [*sic*] of armaments. This so more [*sic*] as, because of the position of Czecho-Slovakia, all our orders which have been under execution and under delivery are suspended and could be cancelled.

No. 542

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)

No. 79 [C 4411/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 27, 1939*

Sir,

Having already outlined to the Turkish Ambassador¹ and the Greek Minister² the line His Majesty's Government were following with a view to concerting resistance to any further German aggression, I asked the Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires to call to-day in order to give him a similar account. I explained to M. Milanovitch that, as a result of the events of ten days or a fortnight ago, we had thought it well to approach the two countries who, in our view, were bound to play an important part in any action intended to

¹ See No. 472.

² See No. 516.

maintain the *status quo* in Central and South-Eastern Europe, namely, Poland and Russia.³

2. Poland, we understood, for reasons which her delicate position made manifest, was not ready to associate herself publicly with Russia, and our thoughts were turning, therefore, to a declaration of solidarity between the French, the Poles and ourselves with which it might be possible to associate Russia in a rather different fashion. If, for instance, any attack were made on the independence of Roumania, the co-operation of Poland was essential, and we were now engaged in consulting the Polish Government as to what action they would be ready to take in such an event or in the event of an attack on themselves or an attack on this country. If Poland felt able to co-operate with ourselves and the French, we on our side would, I felt sure, be ready to co-operate with Poland. I went on to say that it was my intention to inform M. Beck, when he visited this country in the near future, that I hoped it might be possible to arrange for assistance to be afforded by Russia in the event of such German aggression, adding, however, that His Majesty's Government would be ready to agree that such assistance should be afforded without the necessity for the public association of Russia with the proposed declaration.

3. I then informed M. Milanovitch that the independence and integrity of Yugoslavia was not less important to us than that of any other European State. We were, however, very conscious of the particularly delicate situation in which Yugoslavia found herself, and we were not thinking of consulting Yugoslavia in the same sense as we were now consulting Poland. I wondered, however, whether the fact that Italy was clearly anxious to avoid the emergence of any other Power on the Adriatic might not have lessened, to some extent, the particular delicacy of the Yugoslav position. M. Milanovitch enquired whether I had Germany in mind, and, on my assenting, replied that, in his opinion, the fact to which I had drawn his attention did not, in reality, much affect the situation. The important point was the extent to which Italy and Germany were working hand in hand. Yugoslavia was vulnerable both in peace and war, and the Adriatic was not the only frontier that she had to defend. Pressure could be brought to bear, for instance, from the north.

4. I then asked the Chargé d'Affaires whether, if attacked, Yugoslavia would defend herself by arms. M. Milanovitch replied that this was a question which he could not answer without express instructions from his Government, and in his turn asked me what would be the attitude of His Majesty's Government in such an event. I said that in this case, as in the case of Roumania, Poland occupied a key position, and that if Poland and France were ready to take action I thought it probable that we should also be ready to do so.

5. In the course of the conversation M. Milanovitch emphasised more than once that, in spite of the difficulties of the Yugoslav position, due largely to geographical considerations, the Yugoslav nation was, as he put it, 'in mind and soul' on the side of the Western Powers.

6. I concluded the interview by asking M. Milanovitch to assure the Prince

³ See No. 446.

Regent that His Majesty's Government well understood the difficult position of his country and that it was not our intention to ask him formal questions which might prove embarrassing.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 543

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30)

No. 387 E [N 1726/30/59]

BERLIN, March 27, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that, according to the press, the Lithuanian delegation who was in Berlin for the occasion of signing the German-Lithuanian Political Treaty of the 22nd March, 1939, has suggested that the economic negotiations provided for under Article 2 of the Treaty take place in Berlin during the week after Easter.

2. Copies of this despatch have been sent to His Majesty's Representative at Kovno and the Department of Overseas Trade.

I have, &c.,
GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

No. 544

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 28, 3.30 p.m.)

No. 131 Telegraphic [C 4206/15/18]

PARIS, March 28, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

I have acted on your telegram No. 105¹ and left copy of your telegram 56 to Warsaw² with Minister for Foreign Affairs impressing upon him necessity for speed and *above all* for secrecy.

M. Bonnet hopes to give me his reply today.³

¹ No. 537.

² No. 538.

³ See Nos. 558 and 592.

No. 545

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 28, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 49 Telegraphic [N 1683/92/38]

MOSCOW, March 28, 1939, 3.31 p.m.

Your telegram No. 32.¹

Despite strenuous efforts I was unable to get into touch with M. Litvinov until after communiqué had been issued to the Provincial press (including 'Far Eastern Times'). M. Litvinov points out any attempt to stop publication everywhere would be impracticable and would also defeat its own ends. He was extremely surprised that His Majesty's Government should apparently

¹ No. 532.

wish it to be pretended that no exchange of views on international situation had taken place with Mr. Hudson who was a member of the Government and an Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: moreover statements made by Mr. Hudson in the London press just before his departure had led public opinion here and abroad to attach political importance to his mission. In any case he was convinced that His Majesty's Government would approve the communiqué's terms when received in London.

2. Communiqué is printed without comments in today's Moscow press.

3. Reading it now I cannot see—any more than I did when first shown to me—that it contains anything to which objection can be taken save only on supposition that His Majesty's Government desire publicly to abandon after about a week's trial, recent policy of consulting Soviet Government and to relapse into an aloofness which has poisoned relations since Munich. In fact communiqué presents a picture of what I would myself wish Anglo-Soviet relations to be, namely friendliness and contacts but no obligations. ✓

4. Mr. Hudson and his party left last night for Leningrad.

No. 546

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 58 Telegraphic [C 4207/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 28, 1939, 4.35 p.m.*

My telegram No. 56.¹

1. When, on receipt of further instructions, you speak to Polish Foreign Minister as directed, you should open the conversation by saying that I have given much thought to the suggestion reported to me in your telegram No. 72² and repeated to me in greater detail by the Polish Ambassador on March 24.³

2. I was much interested in Colonel Beck's suggestion, and appreciate the reasons which prompted it. It would, however, raise considerable difficulties from our own point of view, and on reflection I think that the alternative plan outlined in my telegram under reference is better designed to meet the present situation.

¹ No. 538.

² No. 485.

³ See No. 518.

No. 547

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 88 Telegraphic [C 4302/54/18]

WARSAW, *March 28, 1939, 5.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 86.¹

I asked Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning if there was any new development as regards Danzig. He stated despite various rumours he could tell me nothing new. He said within the past fortnight the Polish

¹ No. 535.

Government had asked the German Government whether they wished to discuss a modification of statute of the Free City and had as yet received no reply. They have reason to believe that Germans may demand the more drastic solution of annexation but for the moment there is no indication of a threatening attitude on the part of Germany.

I asked Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs . . . [² limit to which]² Polish Government were prepared to go in making concessions. He said the limit insisted on [*sic* ? consisted in] Danzig remaining a Free City, but would agree to waive many if not most of the present limitations of its sovereignty. He thought that the Polish Government could agree to a motor road across the Corridor by which Germans would be able to go from the Reich to Danzig without formalities of any kind, though it would be difficult to give any extra-territoriality privileges.

I asked Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he thought Poland could agree to annexation to Reich coupled with demilitarisation but he thought it would be essential to insist on continuance of status of the Free City.

He told me Polish Government had no information of troop movements or other measures in Germany indicating possibility of a *coup*. The reports regarding anti-German demonstrations in Bydgoszcz and elsewhere were correct though no one had been injured. Measures were being taken by the authorities to prevent repetition of demonstrations of this kind and there was no reason to believe that German Government took them very seriously.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 548

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 7.20 p.m.)

No. 194 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4272/54/18]

BERLIN, March 28, 1939

The 'National Zeitung', Field Marshal Göring's newspaper, gives front page prominence to a report dated Berlin, March 28, of alleged attacks by members of the Polish Western League¹ on Germans. The incidents are said to have occurred at Bromberg, on March 24 and 26. Women and children, it is said, are being molested in the streets when they speak German, German houses and shops have been smeared with tar, and German farmsteads have been attacked at night. At a meeting at Bromberg on March 26 of the Polish Western League, unrepeatable insults were hurled at the German Reich and at the Führer, the worst offender being one M. Kulesza, a judge at Bromberg,

¹ An organisation concerned with countering the German danger to Poland and anti-State activities of the German minority, as well as protecting the Polish minority in German territories.

who had demanded economic and cultural boycott of Germans living in Poland.

Responsible circles in Poland, the 'National Zeitung' writes, suspect that foreign agencies, presumably France and Britain, are behind this system of agitation against Germans, with a view to disturbing German-Polish relations. Whether this is true or not, however, outrages of this kind and their non-suppression by Polish authorities represent in the long run an intolerable strain on Polish-German friendship.

The 'National Zeitung' seizes this opportunity to publish a second despatch from Gleiwitz in German Upper Silesia, in which figures are given of dismissals of Germans in Polish Upper Silesian industries during the last five years, and of similar numbers of dismissals of Germans in the industries of former Czech Silesia.

Up to the present no Berlin newspaper has given publicity to above-mentioned incidents and dismissal (? of Junkers)². Fact that 'National Zeitung' chooses this particular moment to publish reports of this kind which in themselves reveal no new state of affairs may not be without some significance.

Repeated to Warsaw.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 549

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 147 Telegraphic [C 4287/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 28, 1939, 9.50 p.m.*

My telegram No. 142.¹

1. Please communicate the following to the State Department for the personal information of the President.

2. The situation, as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom see it, is that the absorption of Czecho-Slovakia has clearly revealed Germany's intentions. It marks the first departure from the Nazi racial theory, and there is little reason to suppose that it is not the German intention to extend over other countries in Europe, notably Roumania and Poland, a control equivalent to that obtained over Czecho-Slovakia.

3. It is of importance to Germany to avoid a war on two fronts, and her recent behaviour has stiffened the attitude at any rate of Poland, and created strong apprehension in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It is Germany's purpose gradually to neutralise these countries, to deprive them of their power to resist, and to incorporate them in the German economic system. When this has been done, the way will have been prepared for an attack on the Western European Powers.

4. Germany may seek to achieve her aims directly, by way of military

¹ No. 514.

attack, or indirectly, by undermining the independence of other countries by economic penetration or national disintegration, or threats of force.

5. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have been and are still engaged in consultation with a number of other Governments on the present situation, which is one of grave potential menace to the countries of Western Europe and of the whole British Commonwealth.

6. The policy of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has been described by the Prime Minister in his statement in the House of Commons on March 23 as follows:

'I wish to make it clear, however, that there is no desire on the part of His Majesty's Government to stand in the way of any reasonable efforts on the part of Germany to expand her export trade. Nor is this Government anxious to set up in Europe opposing blocks of countries with different ideas about the forms of their internal administration.

We are solely concerned here with the proposition that we cannot submit to a procedure under which independent States are subjected to such pressure, under threat of force, as to be obliged to yield up their independence, and we are resolved by all means in our power to oppose attempts, if they should be made, to put such a procedure into operation'.²

7. The purpose of the consultations upon which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are engaged is to fortify, by as wide a measure of international collaboration as may be achieved, the natural resistance which States are bound to offer to attempts that may be made to constrain them, directly or indirectly, to yield up their independence.

8. At the recent conversations with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs in London,³ general agreement was reached between the French Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as to the best course of action to adopt in view of the reluctance of the Polish Government to accept the proposed Four-Power declaration.

9. Instructions have accordingly been drafted for His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw and His Majesty's Minister at Bucharest, prescribing the lines of an approach they are to make to the Polish and Roumanian Governments.

10. The purport of these instructions is given in my immediately following telegram.⁴ The intention is that the approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be made in similar terms by the British and French representatives at Warsaw and Bucharest. The terms of the instructions have been submitted to the French Government for their assent, and if the French Government agree, instructions will be sent to the British and French representatives at Warsaw and Bucharest to act accordingly.

11. It has been pointed out to the French Government that the Soviet Government, while not associated directly with the proposed arrangements, would be kept in touch with developments and invited to undertake to lend

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 1461-3.

³ See Nos. 458 and 484.

⁴ No. 551.

their assistance in certain circumstances in the most convenient form; and we have expressed the hope that the French Government would cooperate with us in endeavouring to secure this from the Soviet Government.⁴

⁴ This telegram and No. 551 were repeated to Cairo, and Sir M. Lampson was informed on March 31 that he might communicate their substance to the Egyptian Prime Minister.

No. 550

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 28, 11.30 p.m.)

No. 195 Telegraphic [C 4290/54/18]

BERLIN, March 28, 1939, 9.51 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 84.¹

Polish Ambassador confirms that Danzig question is at present in [? under] discussion mainly I understand in Warsaw. With regard to possibility of a German *coup* he was unable to express an opinion other than that anything might happen in these times.

Repeated to Warsaw and Danzig.

¹ No. 534.

No. 551

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 148 Telegraphic [C 4288/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 28, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

The following is the purport of the draft instructions for His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw and His Majesty's Minister at Bucharest referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Enquiries in the various capitals concerned have shown that it will not be possible to proceed without modification with the proposed Four-Power declaration. While the French Government have accepted the proposal, and while the Soviet Government have accepted, subject to acceptance by France and Poland, the Polish Government are reluctant to associate themselves with the Soviet Union in a public declaration of this kind.

2. It is becoming clear that our attempts to consolidate the situation will be frustrated if the Soviet Union is openly associated with the initiation of the scheme. Recent telegrams from a number of His Majesty's Missions abroad have warned us that the inclusion of Russia would not only jeopardise the success of our constructive effort, but also tend to consolidate the relations of the parties to the anti-Comintern Pact, as well as excite anxiety among a number of friendly Governments.

3. Some alternative method of approach must therefore be sought. In any scheme, the inclusion of Poland is vital as the one strong Power bordering on

¹ No. 549.

Germany in the East, and the inclusion of Roumania is also of the first importance, since Roumania may be the State primarily menaced by Germany's plans for Eastern expansion.

4. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have, therefore, decided to make an approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments in the following sense.

(a) Germany may either directly attack Poland or Roumania, or may undermine either country's independence, whether by processes of economic penetration or national disintegration, as in the case of Czecho-Slovakia, or by indirect military pressure, which, in the case of Roumania, might take the form of Hungarian troop concentrations. Are Poland and Roumania respectively prepared actively to resist if their own independence is threatened in any of these ways?

(b) If so, Great Britain and France would be prepared to come to the help of the threatened State. It would be understood that, as a counterpart for the undertaking by Great Britain and France to support Poland and Roumania, Poland and Roumania would keep Great Britain and France fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening their independence;

(c) The assurance offered in (b) is dependent upon Poland coming to the help of Roumania, if the latter is the State threatened. We should wish to know whether Roumania would be prepared to come to the help of Poland if the latter were the State threatened.

(d) (The present section (d) of the communication is to be made to the Polish Government only, since Poland, unlike Roumania, has a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with France, and is a stronger military power than Roumania). The undertaking given by Great Britain and France under (b) would be given as part of a reciprocal arrangement by which if Great Britain or France were attacked by Germany, or if they went to war with Germany to resist German aggression anywhere in Western Europe or Yugoslavia, Poland would come to their help.

5. If the position of Poland and Roumania can be consolidated, Turkey and Greece could more easily be rallied to the common cause and would be more likely to be able to make an effective contribution.

6. It is important that the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be made aware of the manner in which we would propose to deal with the Soviet difficulty. It is desirable to preserve the interest of the Soviet Union in this scheme. The intention would be, at some convenient moment in the discussions, to explain to the Soviet Government that it was proposed in the first place to proceed with the Governments of the two countries nearer to Germany and most likely to be affected by the potential danger of the situation. In the event of an attack on Poland or Roumania there would be good reasons on the merits of the case for trying to secure some measure of Soviet participation. We believe that even the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet Union would be to the advantage of these two countries in case of war, and that they might indeed be grateful in an emergency to have at their disposal such war material as Soviet industry would be in a position to furnish. We

are disposed in the first place to ascertain the view of the Soviet Government as to their likely attitude to this proposal. It is important not to reinforce their tendency towards isolation and we propose to consider in due course how best to retain their close interest which is, after all, to their own general advantage.

7. It is essential of course that the present approach to the Polish and Roumanian Governments should be kept secret, as well as any negotiations that may follow it. Once however agreement had been secured, it would be necessary, for constitutional reasons, that some statement should be made in Parliament. His Majesty's Government would at any rate have to state in public the assurances which they had given to the Polish and Roumanian Governments. It is possible that the Polish Government might be reluctant to agree to make public such counter-assurances as they would have given to us, but His Majesty's Government would certainly be pressed to say whether any such counter-assurances had been given and they would very much hope to be in a position to announce the fact.

8. Your French colleague will receive similar instructions and you should, after consulting him, speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of the present telegram.

No. 552

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 214 [C 4155/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 28, 1939*

Sir,

The Soviet Ambassador called on the 23rd March on Sir A. Cadogan and told him, although he understood we had already received news to that effect through Your Excellency, that the reply of his Government to our enquiry about the Four-Power declaration was in the affirmative.

2. Sir A. Cadogan said that we had already received this information from you¹ and that we appreciated the prompt affirmative reply given by the Soviet Government. At the same time we had been somewhat disconcerted at the proposal of the Soviet Government to make a public announcement on the subject today.² M. Maisky at once said that he understood that his Government had now revised their decision on this point and would not be publishing.

3. He then went on to question Sir A. Cadogan as to the general progress of our negotiation. Sir A. Cadogan told him that so far we were without a final answer from the Polish Government. He enquired whether the Polish Government appeared to be making any serious difficulty. Sir A. Cadogan said that it was easy to understand that the Polish Government at this

¹ See No. 490.

² This should read 'that day', i.e. March 23.

junction should feel themselves to be in a difficult position: they had told us, in fact, that the matter would require very careful consideration. It was not unnatural that they might hesitate before committing themselves in peace time to joining openly a *bloc* which was obviously designed for resistance to German expansion. Sir A. Cadogan was bound to say in all frankness that their hesitation on this point seemed to be increased by the reflection that, if they joined a *bloc* which included the Soviet Government, that in itself would expose them all the more to German indignation. However, Sir A. Cadogan repeated that they appeared to be still considering the matter and we would of course keep closely in touch with M. Maisky.

4. He then enquired whether, if we secured the declaration, we should then proceed to get in touch with other Powers. In his view it would be advisable to secure the co-operation of as many countries as possible. Sir A. Cadogan said that that would no doubt come up for consideration in the course of the exchanges of views which would follow on the declaration, but, as a personal observation, he suggested that it might perhaps be as well to start with certain countries who appeared to be more directly in the road of German advance and who were already organised in some treaty arrangements. To collect a large number of countries together might make an impressive list, but in actual practice one had to weigh the advantage of the rather slight military assistance that they could offer against the disadvantage that this would assist Germany in convincing her people that they were being deliberately surrounded and marked down as the victims of aggression.

5. M. Maisky then asked whether we had any indication as to the Italian attitude. Sir A. Cadogan said that it seemed likely that Herr Hitler had not taken Signor Mussolini into his confidence and that the latter was accordingly offended. It seemed clear also from reports reaching us from Italy that the Italian people in general disapproved and distrusted this new German adventure. M. Maisky asked whether the French Government had given us any indication that they thought that there was any prospect of an arrangement with Italy, and Sir A. Cadogan replied that M. Bonnet had not been able to encourage us to think that that was immediately likely. M. Maisky expressed the view that too many people here and elsewhere were talking of now detaching Italy from the Axis: it might happen one day that, if we could show Signor Mussolini that what M. Maisky called the Peace Front was stronger than Germany, Signor Mussolini might decide to throw in his lot with the former. But only facts would count with Signor Mussolini, and endeavours to persuade him to sever his connexion with Berlin might only rouse in him the suspicion that we were weaker than was really the case.

6. Finally, M. Maisky asked what truth there was in recent press reports to the effect that His Majesty's Government and the French Government had pledged themselves to the defence of Holland and Switzerland. Sir A. Cadogan said that recently, when there had been rumours of German designs on those countries, there had been an exchange of views between His Majesty's Government and the French Government. We had indicated that we should feel bound to come to the defence of Holland; the French had said

the same about Switzerland. M. Maisky did not pursue his enquiries any further.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 553

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 741 [C 4237/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 28, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this morning. I began by asking His Excellency's permission to speak to him very frankly about one topic before he exposed to me what he had in mind. The matter that I wished to mention to him was the disclosure in Paris of the air production figures that the Prime Minister had confidentially given to M. Bonnet at our recent meeting¹ in the Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons. It really was quite impossible to conduct confidential discussions if disclosures of this kind were to be expected, and my anxiety was greatly increased by the fear that the same thing might happen in the course of Staff conversations, which would be very much more serious. I accordingly begged M. Corbin to represent to M. Bonnet in whatever way he thought best what a grave view I felt compelled to take of what had occurred.

2. M. Corbin said that he understood and shared my view, and that he would certainly speak strongly to both M. Bonnet and M. Daladier in the sense I had suggested. He hinted, after giving me this assurance, that M. Bonnet had been disposed to take the line, in response to an earlier protest, that he had supposed the publication of the figures to be rather a compliment to us than otherwise.

3. The Ambassador then said that he had received a message from M. Bonnet to the effect that the French Air Minister, M. Guy La Chambre, would be glad to visit London for the purpose of placing himself in consultation with the Secretary of State for Air as to means by which French production could best be accelerated. He would be prepared to start any time on or after next Thursday and would only be bringing one or two of his experts. M. Corbin hoped that the Secretary of State for Air would speak with the utmost frankness to him, which would not, he thought, be resented. I told the Ambassador that I would at once communicate what he had said to the Secretary of State for Air, who, I had no doubt, would be delighted to welcome M. Guy La Chambre and give him any help that was in his power as soon as arrangements mutually convenient could be made.²

4. M. Corbin then turned to make a short reference to Signor Mussolini's recent speech.³ The general judgment of French opinion was that this might

¹ See No. 484.

² M. La Chambre visited London, April 3-6.

³ See No. 381, note 1.

have been worse, but that it was not calculated to make things easier, nor, indeed, did it show much desire for a settlement.

5. The French Government proposed to publish the Notes⁴ exchanged between the French and Italian Governments in December, and in M. Corbin's view it was essential to get the Italians to say definitely what they wanted. That must be the first step, as it was impossible for the French to make unspecified offers on a dish and expose themselves to the probable reply that this menu was not agreeable to the Italian Government.

6. In regard to the general situation, I told the Ambassador briefly of the instructions that we had sent to you by telegram last night⁵ for communication to M. Bonnet. The more one pondered the situation, the more evident it became how key a position that of Poland was. This led the Ambassador to make some reference to the conversations at present going on in Berlin between Poland and Germany. He presumed these were concerned immediately with Danzig, but he thought they possibly had some wider scope, covering the Corridor. Meanwhile, we were again watching the familiar technique of press complaints operating on both sides; but this, in the Ambassador's view, might well be only part of the general stage setting, while the real business was being prepared behind. The French Government had, however, no direct information from the Polish Government.

7. The last subject to which M. Corbin referred was that of our Ambassadors in Berlin. He had no instructions from M. Bonnet and merely spoke by way of enquiry. I said that I had always had it in mind not to keep our Ambassador away indefinitely or, indeed, too long; for the longer he was away the harder it became to get him back. I did not think that we need necessarily send them back at the same moment, but we would keep in touch with one another and we would not take a final decision without letting the French Government know. My own inclination, subject to the views of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, was beginning to set in the direction of instructing Sir Nevile Henderson to return to his post perhaps next week.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

⁴ See Volume III of this Series, Nos. 482 and 484 (Annex).

⁵ See No. 537.

No. 554

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 75 [N 1583/30/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 28, 1939*

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 69¹ of the 22nd March, I have to inform you that on the 23rd March the Lithuanian Minister communicated, on instructions from his Government, an *aide-mémoire*, a copy of which is enclosed

¹ No. 497.

herein, reporting the terms of the agreement signed at Berlin for the cession of the Memelland to Germany.

2. M. Balutis also stated on this occasion that his Government were anxious (presumably for reasons of internal politics and to ensure that Lithuanian public opinion understood their position, though this was not explicitly stated in his instructions) that it should be made clear that throughout this crisis they had acted correctly towards the signatory Powers and had only accepted the German ultimatum because the Powers had let it be known in advance that they could not help them. For obvious reasons they would prefer to be able to quote statements by representatives of the signatory Powers themselves rather than issue a statement of their own: and, as it had been announced in the House of Commons that a full statement of the circumstances surrounding the cession of Memel would shortly be made in that House (as will be seen from the enclosure in my despatch No. 74² of the 28th March), they ventured to suggest that this statement might include a reference to the attitude of His Majesty's Government, as expressed to him both on the 16th March (see my despatch No. 650³ to His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris) and by me personally on the 22nd March, viz., that, while they could not have advised the Lithuanian Government in advance to ignore the Memel Statute, they could not blame them for acting in disregard of the Statute and without consulting the signatory Powers in circumstances such as they were faced with.

3. This request seemed to me reasonable, and, as will be seen from the enclosed copy⁴ of the relevant extract from the report of parliamentary debates, it has been met by the wording of the last part of the statement made yesterday by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw and His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

² Not printed.

³ No. 413.

⁴ Not printed. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 1684-5.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 554

Aide-mémoire

KAUNAS, March 22, 1939

This evening our delegates signed at Berlin a treaty according to which—

1. The Memel Territory is joined to the Reich.
2. The armed forces immediately leave the Memel Territory.
3. Agreement will be reached later with regard to economic, financial and nationality questions emanating from the separation.
4. A free zone in the port will be arranged for Lithuania.
5. Lithuania and Germany pledge themselves not to employ force the one against the other.

In an annex general lines are laid down for the arrangement of the free

port zone, i.e., the German Harbour Board will lease the necessary land and water areas to a harbour company for a term of ninety-nine years; (2) this harbour company will be formed, in accordance with a Lithuanian-German agreement, with predominant Lithuanian capital; (3) the lease will be deemed to have been paid through the investments effected in the port by Lithuania; (4) in Lithuania's communication with the free zone the transport of goods will be exempted from payment of customs duty.

No. 555

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 29)

No. 373 [C 4325/13/18]

PARIS, March 28, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a memorandum by the Military Attaché recording a conversation with Colonel Gauché.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 555

The Ambassador

No. 387

PARIS, March 27, 1939

I saw Colonel Gauché this morning. He told me that the war material captured by the Germans in Czecho-Slovakia amounted to:

- 20,000 machine guns
- 2,200 guns of all calibres
- 1,800 anti-tank guns
- 600 tanks of excellent quality
- 750 aeroplanes
- 1,500,000 rifles
- 30,000 horses.

Reserves for all the above can be manufactured in the factories of Czecho-Slovakia. He was of the opinion that for this reason the material would be taken into service in the German army, and he thought it more than likely that it was the prospect of capturing these war stocks which had tempted Hitler to take over Czecho-Slovakia.

Going on to talk about the international situation, Colonel Gauché stated that he was convinced that the democracies could expect nothing in the way of military assistance from Russia. It was to Stalin's interest now as always that the democracies and totalitarian states should cut one another's throats, which would pave the way for bolshevism in Europe and effectively safeguard Russian territory; but he was no more interested in seeing the totalitarians vanquished by the democracies than *vice-versa*. At the same time, he would be glad if some arrangement could be made which would induce Russia to provide Poland and Roumania with arms.

W. FRASER

Colonel, Military Attaché

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30)

No. 392 E [C 4393/32/18]

BERLIN, March 28, 1939

My Lord,

Now that Bohemia and Moravia have to all intents and purposes been incorporated in the Reich, it is of some interest to attempt to assess in general terms the advantages or otherwise which may be regarded as accruing to Germany in the military and economic fields as a result of their new territorial acquisition.

2. In the military sphere, the German Government have at last obtained the fulfilment of their desire for security on a portion of their eastern frontier which, in their opinion, was continually exposed to threats from a potential enemy. In addition, the German frontier has been considerably shortened, whilst the strategic position has been vastly improved in the event of Germany electing to embark on fresh adventures in an easterly direction at the expense of neighbouring States. The rectification of the frontier is, I feel convinced, in German eyes one of the most important and immediate benefits. In addition, the acquisition of huge stocks of war material, which can either be employed in Germany or used for export purposes, and the control of important armament plants must necessarily increase the fighting power and value of the German army or at any rate provide Germany with advantages of an economic order. This aspect of the question has been examined in my despatch No. 340¹ of the 19th March.

3. Economic and financial considerations have certainly carried considerable weight in the councils of those responsible for German policy. Security in a military sense requires as an indispensable accompaniment the raw material and food-stuffs to satisfy military exigencies and home consumption requirements. In this connexion I attach a memorandum prepared by the Financial Adviser and the Commercial Secretary to this Embassy, from which it is evident that, although the German Government may benefit in time from the mineral wealth of Bohemia and Moravia, the supply of grain at present available is unlikely to provide any surplus for use outside the newly acquired provinces. As in the case of Austria and Sudetenland (see Sir N. Henderson's despatch No. 237 E.² of the 21st February), the existing industries which previously may have had a wide market for their products abroad will now find themselves hemmed in within the German customs union, with the result that, in order to prevent needless internal competition, large parts of the industrial machine may have to be completely reorganised by the German Government, and foreign exchange will be lost as a result of the fall in exports. It seems fairly certain, therefore, that the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia will for some time to come prove a heavy liability to the German economy. The only immediate assets which Germany may be

¹ No. 434.

² Not printed. This despatch dealt with the question of the economic value to Germany of Austria and the Sudeten territory, and of a possible absorption of the Ukraine.

likely to derive from the new territory, apart from war material, may take the form of labour, stocks of industrial raw materials and foreign exchange and securities.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to the Department of Overseas Trade.

I have, &c.,
GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

ENCLOSURE IN No. 556

Memorandum respecting the Economic Aspects of German Protectorship over Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia

BERLIN, March 22, 1939

The German annexation of Bohemia and Moravia and the inclusion in the German customs area of Slovakia represents a substantial increase of natural resources in the form of coal and lignite, timber, iron ore, magnesite refractory clay, manganese ore, mercury, lead, silver and other ores: and sugar beet, each with highly developed industries based upon them. The supply of grain and food-stuffs in general, including animals and fodder, will provide little or no immediate surplus for the Reich, as the surplus of agricultural produce in Slovakia does not exceed the requirements of Bohemia and Moravia. Whether German methods will increase the output remains to be seen.

2. Many of the industries in these territories are competitive with those of Germany, though some, undoubtedly, will be complementary. It may be anticipated that the exports of former Czecho-Slovak industries to other countries will substantially decline, though the consumption in the Reich of their production is likely to increase.

3. An estimate of the foreign trade of Czecho-Slovakia as divided after Munich, made by the Industrial Association of Prague, indicates that Bohemia and Moravia on the whole have been greater consumers than producers:—

	<i>Czecho-Slovakia after Munich.</i>				<i>Territory ceded under Munich.</i>	
					<i>Million Czech crowns.</i>	
Imports	7,447	3,533
Exports	6,848	5,124
Balance	—	599	+	1,591

It is furthermore estimated that trade exchanges between the Sudetenland and the rest of Czecho-Slovakia normally resulted in an adverse balance for the latter of approximately 300 million crowns per annum. Certain production figures for the separate provinces (for 1937) have appeared in the German press:—

Metric tons—	<i>Bohemia.</i>	<i>Moravia.</i>	<i>Slovakia.</i>
Coal	2,308,500	5,285,900	...
Lignite	97,500	382,500	732,900
Iron ore	745,200	...	770,200
Manganese ore	43,400	...	2,900
Silver, lead and zinc ore	109,400	...	59,600
Mercury ore ... ..	...	...	5,400
Oil ... ..	...	4,600	13,300
Earth gas (cubic metres) ... ..	...	1,341,200	117,848
Pig iron	384,700	757,300	47,800
Steel, rolled iron and iron foundry	751,200	802,200	79,000
Lead, antimony and zinc	4,300	...	670
Copper	100	3,000	...
Kilogrammes—			
Mercury ... ..	...	...	94,800
Silver	27,543	...	6,778
Gold	7	...	299

The most important industries in the newly acquired territory are the metallurgical and electrical works, producing goods valued at 5,700 million Czech crowns; the textile factories with an output value of 2,700 million crowns per annum; the food-stuffs, wine, spirit and brewery industries, output value 2,200 million crowns per annum; the chemical industry, annual production value 1,900 million crowns; and the clothing and footwear industry, producing 1,800 million crowns per annum. The values given above are estimated in respect of industries in the territory remaining to Czecho-Slovakia after Munich, and thus include Ruthenia, now in Hungarian occupation. Industries in that area are mainly connected with food-stuffs and wine production and scarcely affect the estimates regarding other groups mentioned.

4. Germany expects to find a most welcome additional supply of labour in the Czecho-Slovak provinces.

5. The fact that the new territories produce certain commodities which Germany needs does not, however, mean that Germany is economically enriched by the acquisition of those territories. In so far as Czecho-Slovakia lived by exporting such goods, Germany can only take them for herself at the cost of losing 'Devisen'. It is only with a considerable expenditure of time and labour that the financial resources of the new provinces can be exploited for Germany's benefit.

6. On the other hand, Germany will take advantage of the fact that stocks of industrial raw materials were no doubt higher in Czecho-Slovakia in relation to the extent of her industries than in Germany. She may export to Roumania and elsewhere the arms taken from the Czech army. Further, Germany will, of course, utilise such resources of gold, foreign exchange and foreign securities as are to be found in the hands either of the Czech National Bank, the Czech Government or private individuals in the new provinces.

We are not at present aware how much of the published reserve of the Czecho-Slovak National Bank, amounting to about £25 million, consists of gold or balances abroad which can be blocked, nor what is likely to be the extent of the foreign investments of private persons in Czecho-Slovakia.

7. Germany will also no doubt do her best to repudiate Czecho-Slovakia's foreign debts, and in the present political atmosphere it may prove very difficult for foreign countries to reach a reasonable arrangement on this matter.

8. A material question will be whether the German Government will find it politically possible to lower the standard of living in Czecho-Slovakia or even keep it down to its present level. It will be remembered that in Austria and the Sudetenland it has been necessary for political reasons to feed the population better than in Germany.

9. On the whole it is uncertain whether the new territories will bring any economic gain to Germany. It seems more likely that the large investments and writings-off necessary to bring their industries and resources into rational relationship with developments in the Reich will be a further drain on the already strained finances of Germany. A far-reaching economic reorganisation will be necessary to secure continued prosperity in the three provinces. In view of German economic policy, as confirmed by her recent approaches to Roumania, this is likely to take the form of de-industrialisation and more intensive development of primary production, notably mining, forestry and agriculture.

G. H. S. PINSENT
A. F. MERRY

No. 557

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 29, 9.45 a.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4301/15/18]

WARSAW, March 29, 1939

Your telegram No. 56.¹

Colonel Beck will be leaving for London on Sunday.² I hope I may receive instructions to approach him as soon as possible as it is clearly desirable that he should be able fully to consult his Government before departure.

I would venture to suggest that in the meantime as little publicity as possible be given to these consultations.

Please inform Paris.

¹ No. 538.

² April 2.

No. 558

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 29, 5.50 p.m.)

No. 136 Telegraphic [C 4361/15/18]

PARIS, March 29, 1939, 4.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 56 to Warsaw.¹

French Government agree.²

Repeated to Bucharest, Moscow and Warsaw.

¹ No. 538.

² For the text of the French reply, see No. 592.

No. 559

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*

No. 60¹ Telegraphic [C 4207/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 29, 1939, 5.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 56 (65).²

Please insert words 'to Poland' after words 'given by Great Britain and France under (b)' in paragraph 4 (d).

Repeated to Paris and Moscow.

¹ No. 60 to Warsaw, No. 69 to Bucharest.

² No. 538.

No. 560

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 29, 6.30 p.m.)*

No. 199 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4444/54/18]

BERLIN, March 29, 1939

My telegram No. 194.¹

In comment on the alleged anti-German incidents in Poland the 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz' of March 28 writes that these incidents have made it clear that the policy agreed upon between Marshal Pilsudski and Herr Hitler on the 26th January, 1934 is being rejected in certain quarters in Poland. The fact that the German press had not taken undue notice of these incidents should not lead to the false conclusion that they had been overlooked or that threats and insults against everything that is German are of no interest to Germany. German reserve in this respect was on the contrary dictated exclusively by the desire and by the hope that such unfortunate incidents merely represented a passing wave of chauvinism which could soon be overcome by spirit of reason, appreciation for practical politics and lastly by the memory of the old yet still valid line of policy adopted by Marshal Pilsudski.

2. Unfortunately, the 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz'

¹ No. 548.

continues, German expectations in this respect have not yet been fulfilled and it appears as though, to the joy of those who are interested in disturbing German-Polish relations, no serious halt was being called to agitation directed against everything that is German and as though no importance were any longer attached to the maintenance of sincere relations with the German people.

3. In spite of the fact that relations between the German and Polish nations had been severely strained by Versailles, Herr Hitler had consistently impressed upon the German people that the existence of an independent and strong nation at Germany's side should be regarded by Germany as a necessity in the sense of a stable order in East Europe and that it was therefore desirable and necessary to maintain friendly relations with this State. The German-Polish agreement of 1934 was the practical realization of this conception.

4. Continuing, the 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz' says that if the Polish side should conceive the idea that a corresponding attitude by Poland towards Germany was not required to the same degree, or in other words that consideration for the vital rights and the honour of the German people was unnecessary, it would be as regrettable for future harmonious relations in the European realm as it would be harmful to the Polish nation itself. Local politics as practised in certain Polish towns which find it quite proper to insult and to persecute Germans can indeed represent nothing but a profession of faith in the spirit of Versailles. Responsible circles in Poland on the other hand will certainly not overlook the special geographical position of their State which had hitherto required Polish policy to strive for the maintenance of good neighbourly relations on all sides and to avoid the creation of tension.

5. In conclusion the 'Deutsche Diplomatische-Politische Korrespondenz' writes that Poland herself must know what degree of success her line of policy as practised hitherto has brought to her and in what measure her independence and her world importance has thereby grown. It appears to be doubtful whether a departure from this line of policy could have a beneficial effect even if the alluring song of foreign sirens is leading her in another direction.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 561

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*

No. 61¹ Telegraphic [C 4414/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 29, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 136.²

You should now take action on my telegram No. 56 (No. 65).³

Repeated to Paris, Moscow and Berlin.

¹ No. 61 to Warsaw, No. 70 to Bucharest.

² No. 558.

³ No. 538.

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 86 Telegraphic [C 4400/15/18]

BUCHAREST, March 29, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan:—

Your (? telegram) No. 65¹ and my despatch of January 3².

1. My recent letter to you³ was drafted under immediate shock of Czech collapse as were His Majesty's Government's proposals for a Four-Power Declaration. The signature of the trade agreement with Germany suggests the following conclusions.

2. Now that the Roumanians have done all in their power to prove that at whatever cost they would resist invasion, the danger of invasion whether by direct or indirect means is decidedly more remote, as invasion however rapid and successful would inevitably result in widespread destruction and for some considerable time reduction of the value of Roumania as economic hinterland. Let it be admitted after a period of reconstruction Germany might extract from a conquered Roumania fifty per cent. more raw materials than an independent Roumania will produce, however satisfactorily to Germany the present agreement is implemented. Time being a vital factor, I am inclined to doubt whether Germany will consider invasion worth while though this does not, however, mean that I no longer advocate preparation of immediate reply to a threat of invasion.

3. Military assistance which Roumania could afford Poland in the opening phases of a war is negligible and it seems certain that, if Roumania declared war on Germany, Hungary would, whether reluctantly or not, at once join in.

4. On the other hand it seems to me that Roumania, acting in close political co-operation with her Balkan allies, especially Yugoslavia, might be able to ensure for a time at least the neutrality of Hungary. Whatever part Italy may play in Armageddon I feel that the Italians would heartily welcome and at least secretly support attempt to keep Hungary neutral as it is glaringly obvious that if the opening stages of war went well for Germany Italians would soon find themselves racing Hungarians (who would in these circumstances be synonymous with Germans) for the Adriatic Coast (compare race for Salonica in the Balkan war). Promise of help from Poland to Roumania would of course not save Roumania from being overrun if Germany did attack her but I agree that such a promise is essential because it would establish Poland's determination to join in resisting German hegemony.

5. As for Russia I fancy that Roumania would accept but probably not appeal for help.

¹ No. 538.

² Not printed.

No. 563

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 62 Telegraphic [C 4402/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 29, 1939, 9.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 61.¹

In view of reasons which we have for lack of confidence in M. Beck, would you think it desirable to make the communication also to some other personality, such as the President or the Marshal? If so, I presume that you would think it necessary to tell M. Beck that you are doing so.

2. I am quite content to leave this matter entirely to your discretion.

No. 561.

No. 564

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 30, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 91 Telegraphic [C 4364/54/18]

WARSAW, *March 29, 1939, 10.10 p.m.*

In view of persistent reports that Germany had made the following three demands on Poland:

1. Change in the status of Danzig,
2. Motor road across the Corridor,
3. Adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact, I asked Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs this evening whether these reports were true. He admitted that the President of the Diet had made a revelation of this nature to a delegation of the O.Z.N.,¹ but that they were not demands which had been made since my interview with him yesterday, but were *desiderata* communicated to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin within the past fortnight. Further it was not correct that Germany had insisted on Poland's adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact but Germany had asked for explanations as to the present policy of Poland towards the Soviet and had suggested that Poland should bring her policy in this connexion more nearly into line with that of Germany. No reply has as yet been made to this *démarche* and at the present moment there is no sign of menacing attitude by Germany. It is extremely difficult to get straightforward answers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They are probably afraid of the reactions both from Germany and public opinion here.

My impression, however, is that these demands were made in the middle of last week and probably were the direct cause of the calling up of reservists.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ i.e. 'Camp of National Unity', the official Government party.

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 46 Telegraphic [C 4401/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 29, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Soviet Ambassador today enquired meaning of Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on March 28. He had not been aware that His Majesty's Government were proposing to go further than consultation.

2. The Ambassador was reminded that the original proposal contemplated consultation with a view to concerting measures, and therefore went rather further than pure consultation.

3. As regards action contemplated by His Majesty's Government, he was reminded that Polish Government had shown hesitation in regard to open association with the Soviet Government in declaration, in view of probable reactions in Germany. In the circumstances His Majesty's Government were not pursuing idea of Four-Power declaration, and had been considering what other line they could take. Poland and Roumania were most exposed to attack and it was essential to ascertain what the spirit of resistance of these two countries would be, and in what way it could best be fortified. His Majesty's Government were therefore contemplating the possibility of giving assurances, together with the French Government, to Poland and Roumania. If these countries were determined to resist, and were ultimately engaged in a conflict with Germany, they would no doubt be glad of the sympathy and indeed of the active assistance of the Soviet Union, in whatever way might seem most suitable and effective.

4. The Ambassador asked whether we contemplated direct military assistance to Poland and Roumania. He was told that this was what those countries would require and that His Majesty's Government were contemplating the possibility of giving assurances to that effect. The matter was still under consideration and no firm decision had been taken, but the French Government appeared to be sympathetic to the idea.

5. The Ambassador said that if His Majesty's Government adopted this course, it would be a revolutionary change in British policy and might have far-reaching results. It would increase enormously the confidence of other countries and might have a very great effect.

6. M. Maisky was told that he would no doubt be informed as soon as a final decision had been taken.

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris, Bucharest and Berlin.

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarised the statement by the Prime Minister referred to above. The Prime Minister had said that what His Majesty's Government had in mind went a good deal further than consultation. See *Parl. Deb.*, 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 1884.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 114 Telegraphic [C 4417/15/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 30, 1939, 3.50 p.m.*

A question is being asked in the House of Commons tomorrow suggesting that a German attack on Poland is imminent and asking what action His Majesty's Government would take in such a case. We have some reason to apprehend that preparations for a *coup* against Poland may be far advanced and that action may be imminent.¹ If anything of the sort occurred, the consequences might evidently be very serious unless we had jointly resolved on action to be taken in such an event.

2. It may take some days yet to conclude with Poland an arrangement such as we have in mind for the defence of Poland and Roumania, and we feel it is highly desirable to give timely warning to the German Government in terms as little provocative as possible concerning any aggression against Poland.

3. In the meantime therefore, in reply to the Parliamentary Question, we propose, if French Government concur, to say that we must not be taken as accepting the rumour of proposed attack as true, but that we had assured the Polish Government that, if pending the conclusion of consultations with other Governments, any action were taken which clearly threatened their independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly felt obliged to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government and the French Government would at once lend them all the support in their power.

4. We presume that this would in any case be the attitude of the French Government, quite apart from the provisions of Franco-Polish alliance.

5. Please ascertain French Government's views urgently and let me know if possible tonight. I shall further be glad to know whether French Government would authorise me to say tomorrow, as I propose, that in this matter their attitude is identical with our own.

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest, Moscow and Berlin.

¹ In addition to the information given in No. 571 Lord Halifax informed his Cabinet colleagues on March 30 that he had seen the Berlin correspondent of the 'News Chronicle', who was one of the two correspondents under sentence of expulsion from Germany. This correspondent had come to London especially in order to give information which had reached him from various sources in Germany to the effect that Poland was the next item on Germany's programme of aggression. This thesis was supported by a good deal of detailed information including the statement of a local industrialist that he had orders to accumulate rations opposite Bromberg by March 28. It was also stated that Germany intended to occupy a considerable part of Poland and to leave only a narrow strip of territory between the German and Russian frontiers. No record of this interview with the correspondent of the 'News Chronicle' has been traced in the Foreign Office archives.

A survey of the various items of information which had reached the Foreign Office by March 30 regarding a possible German attack on Poland gave conflicting results. It seemed clear that Herr Hitler's ultimate aim was to eliminate or neutralize Poland and Roumania but there was not enough evidence to indicate which of the two countries would be the first victim of German aggression. The final decision might, as in the past, be precipitated by events beyond Herr Hitler's control.

No. 567

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30, 3.50 p.m.)

No. 88 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4412/15/18]

BUCHAREST, March 30, 1939

Moscow telegram No. 50¹ and your telegram No. 70.²

On chance that you may wish to modify your instructions I am deferring action till tomorrow. French Minister agrees.

¹ Not printed. This telegram referred to a Tass message reporting the Anglo-French promise of assistance to Poland in case of an attack by Germany, on condition that Poland and Roumania concluded pacts of mutual assistance.

² No. 561.

No. 568

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 66 Telegraphic [C 4417/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1939, 4.20 p.m.

A question is being asked in the House of Commons tomorrow suggesting that a German attack on Poland is imminent and asking what action His Majesty's Government would take in such a case.

We propose, subject to concurrence of French Government, to reply that we must not be taken as accepting the rumour of a proposed attack as true, but that we had assured Polish Government that if, pending conclusion of consultations with other Governments, any action were taken which clearly threatened their independence so that they felt bound to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government and the French Government would at once lend them all the support in their power. His Majesty's Government presume that this reply would be in accord with Polish Government's wishes.

I suggest that you should make this communication in the same quarters as those to which you addressed representations in accordance with my telegram No. 56,¹ and endeavour to obtain immediate expression of their views—if possible tonight.²

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Berlin and Bucharest.

¹ No. 538.

² The draft of this telegram is in the handwriting of Mr. Chamberlain, with additions by Lord Halifax and Sir A. Cadogan.

No. 569

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

Unnumbered Telegraphic [C 3358/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1939¹

Your telegram No. 219.²

Following from Sir A. Cadogan.

We are sending you to-day an account³ of the latest developments in regard to a British guarantee to Poland for your personal information and guidance only, and to provide background for any conversation you may have with Count Ciano and Signor Mussolini.

I would not wish you in the circumstances to hint that the Prime Minister is expecting any reply to his letter⁴; but it would be useful if you could let me know at once by telegram (marked Secret and Personal. Decypher yourself) if you have any reason to believe that any development is expected.

¹ The time of despatch of this telegram is not recorded.

² No. 525.

³ Not printed.

⁴ No. 448.

No. 570

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 77 Telegraphic [C 4412/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1939, 5.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 88.¹

I see no reason to modify instructions. You should take action without delay.

¹ No. 567.

No. 571

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)*

No. 68¹ Telegraphic [C 4505/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 30, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

United States Ambassador states² that United States Ambassador at Warsaw has sent a message to the effect that Hitler considers Ribbentrop deserves great credit for the Memel *coup* and that, on the strength of this, Ribbentrop is now pressing for immediate action against Poland, pointing out that Great Britain and France will fail to support Poland and that this failure would serve to alienate American opinion from France and Great Britain. Have you any comments?

¹ No. 68 to Warsaw, No. 97 to Berlin.

² This information was given to the Foreign Office on March 28.

No. 572

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 30, 7.30 p.m.)

No. 204 Telegraphic [C 4466/54/18]

BERLIN, March 30, 1939, 7.11 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 91¹ and my telegram No. 195.²

In the course of half-an-hour's private conversation on March 28 Polish Ambassador gave no indication whatever that Germany was making demands or was being truculent. He said she was making general suggestions about Danzig. He made no mention either of motor road across the Corridor or of Anti-Comintern Pact.

Ambassador nevertheless gave me the impression that he was uncertain about his Government's attitude and intentions.

Repeated to Warsaw and Danzig.

¹ No. 564.

² No. 550.

No. 573

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 30, 7.50 p.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4454/15/18]

WARSAW, March 30, 1939

Your telegram No. 66.¹

1. M. Beck agreed without hesitation to proposed reply.

2. In these circumstances any comments on my part may seem redundant more especially as Your Lordship doubtless possesses much information not available to me.

3. It is of course unlikely that Polish Government would deliberately provoke Germany. But in present state of feeling here possibility of some impulsive action cannot altogether be excluded.

For instance if Danzig Senate declared their return to Germany Polish troops might well enter territory of the Free City. I venture to suggest insertion of word 'unprovoked' before words 'action were taken' in proposed reply. I do not see how M. Beck could object to this addition should Your Lordship see fit to make it but I have of course not mentioned suggestion to him. Incidentally I might add for what it is worth that both German Ambassador and M. Beck have assured me to-day that German Government have not made any demands in the nature of an ultimatum and that there is no indication that they intend to take more menacing action in the immediate future.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Bucharest and Moscow.

¹ No. 568.

No. 574

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30, 8.40 p.m.)

No. 138 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4452/15/18]

PARIS, March 30, 1939

Your telegram No. 114.¹

French Government agree.

They do not apprehend any imminent *coup* against Poland.

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest, Moscow and Berlin.

¹ No. 566.

No. 575

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 31, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 93 Telegraphic [C 4453/15/18]

WARSAW, March 30, 9.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 56.¹

I communicated to Minister for Foreign Affairs tonight the relevant passages verbally and made sure that he had fully understood them. He thanked me for my communication and stated that he would have time before leaving for London on Sunday to give our proposals mature reflection and to submit them on Saturday at a meeting which he was to attend with the President of the Republic and Marshal Smigly-Rydz. He had practically no immediate observation to make except that the attitude of Hungary as regards Slovakia and the possibility of still preventing Hungary definitely joining the German camp was exercising him considerably at the present time. He wondered whether any proposal such as we had made might not definitely throw her into German arms.

I had previously consulted the French Ambassador and agreed that it might be preferable for him to make a communication in the sense of your proposals to Marshal Smigly-Rydz as he frequently sees him and if I were to do so it would excite more curiosity. M. Noël is seeing the Minister for Foreign Affairs tonight and will see the Marshal tomorrow morning, speaking at length to the latter in my name as well as his.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Bucharest and Moscow.

¹ No. 538.

No. 576

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 10 Saving: Telegraphic¹ [N 1737/30/59]

KOVNO, March 30, 1939

This morning Seimas unanimously approved Government's conduct in concluding Lithuanian-German Treaty of March 22. Formal presidential ratification will doubtless follow.

Repeated Berlin and Foreign Office.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 10 Saving, and was repeated as No. 23 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on March 30 at 4.0 p.m.

No. 577

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received March 31, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 95 Telegraphic [C 4511/54/18]

WARSAW, March 31, 1939, 1.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 68.¹

United States Ambassador tells me that this information was given him by German journalist who has connexion with American press agency in Berlin and has on previous occasions been reliable. Mr. Biddle passed it on to his Government and American Ambassador in London for what it was worth.

¹ No. 571.

No. 578

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received March 31, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 97 Telegraphic [C 4538/15/18]

WARSAW, March 31, 1939, 1.36 p.m.

(? Reference omitted).¹

(? I learn that)² French Ambassador has communicated proposals to Marshal who expressed his pleasure and asked M. Noël to convey his thanks to me as he was speaking in my name.

2. He said that of course the Polish Government would have carefully to consider our proposals but it was clear that his first reaction was one of satisfaction.

¹ The reference should probably be to Warsaw telegram No. 93 (No. 575).

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 579

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 31, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 96 Telegraphic [C 4512/54/18]

WARSAW, March 31, 1939, 1.37 p.m.

I am informed that within the last few days Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs told Roumanian Ambassador:—

1. That Germany had warned Poland that she would regard as a *casus belli* any movement of Polish troops into the Free City of Danzig.

2. That Poland had replied that she would equally regard as a *casus belli* a declaration by Danzig Senate of union with Germany.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 580

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 31, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 206 Telegraphic [C 4508/54/18]

BERLIN, March 31, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 68 to Warsaw.¹

My impression from experience at this post is that all major decisions on foreign affairs are taken by Herr Hitler at the instigation of Herr von Ribbentrop supported and encouraged by a coterie of party extremists connected I believe with Ribbentrop's office and foreign political department of the party. Ministry of Foreign Affairs are not consulted and the Services only as regards technical details. Ribbentrop is now in the ascendant and his views always have been Great Britain will not come up to the scratch. That is where his ill-informed counsel to Hitler is so dangerous.

While I have no confirmation that Ribbentrop is pressing for immediate action against Poland on the grounds indicated, from our knowledge of the man it would not be surprising were it so.

I hear from a usually reliable source that Ribbentrop endeavoured to induce M. Beck to break his journey to London in Berlin but that the latter has refused to do so.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 571.

No. 581

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 143 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4525/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Please give Signor Mussolini immediately (by telegram or telephone if he is still absent from Rome) the following personal message from the Prime Minister:—

Begins:—

‘Having regard to the cordial relations which exist between us, I wish to inform you that, in view of rumours that have gained currency and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I have come to the conclusion that I must make a statement today in the House of Commons. In taking this action I should like you to believe that my sole purpose is to avoid any disturbance of the peace. I feel sure that you will approve my motive.

‘The statement that I am making is in the following terms:—

“As I said this morning His Majesty’s Government have no official confirmation of the rumours of any projected attack on Poland and they must not therefore be taken as accepting them as true.

“I am glad to take this opportunity of stating again the general policy of His Majesty’s Government. They have constantly advocated the adjustment, by way of free negotiation between the parties concerned, of any differences that may arise between them. They consider that this is the natural and proper course where differences exist. In their opinion there should be no question incapable of solution by peaceful means and they would see no justification for the substitution of force or threats of force for the method of negotiation.

“As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty’s Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty’s Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

“I may add that the French Government have authorised me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty’s Government.”

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.’

(Ends).

No. 582

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris) and
Sir M. Lampson (Cairo)*

No. 115¹ Telegraphic [C 4525/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 31, 1939, 2.0 p.m.*

Following is text of statement which the Prime Minister is making in the House of Commons this afternoon. Please inform French (Egyptian) Government.

¹ No. 115 to Paris, No. 252 to Cairo. An identical telegram was sent unnumbered at 3.30 p.m. to Angora, Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest, Moscow, Sofia, Tokyo, Warsaw, and Washington.

Text begins:

'As I said this morning His Majesty's Government have no official confirmation of the rumours of any projected attack on Poland and they must not therefore be taken as accepting them as true.

'I am glad to take this opportunity of stating again the general policy of His Majesty's Government. They have constantly advocated the adjustment, by way of free negotiation between the parties concerned, of any differences that may arise between them. They consider that this is the natural and proper course where differences exist. In their opinion there should be no question incapable of solution by peaceful means and they would see no justification for the substitution of force or threats of force for the method of negotiation.

'As the House is aware, certain consultations are now proceeding with other Governments. In order to make perfectly clear the position of His Majesty's Government in the meantime before those consultations are concluded, I now have to inform the House that during that period in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power. They have given the Polish Government an assurance to this effect.

'I may add that the French Government have authorised me to make it plain that they stand in the same position in this matter as do His Majesty's Government.²

Ends.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

No. 583

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 79 Telegraphic [C 4539/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 31, 1939, 3.50 p.m.*

My circular telegram of March 31.¹

Please at once explain to the Roumanian Government that we have been led to take this interim action regarding Poland alone in view of the information in our possession which seems to indicate the possibility of immediate action against that country. You should at the same time assure the Roumanian Government that His Majesty's Government are resolved to continue with the scheme set out in my telegram No. 65,² and that they will await with interest the receipt of the Roumanian Government's views on the scheme.

¹ Not printed. See No. 582, note 1.

² No. 538.

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 70 Telegraphic [C 4454/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 31, 1939, 5.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 94.¹

1. My unnumbered telegram² of today gives the text of the declaration as made this afternoon in the House of Commons. I decided not to insert the word 'unprovoked', because I felt that the German technique of aggression is so varied and so insidious that it might well be that Poland might in certain circumstances be driven in self-defence to commit a technical act of provocation.

2. You should, however, impress upon Colonel Beck that in making this declaration His Majesty's Government are naturally and confidently relying on the Polish Government to take particular care to avoid an uncompromising attitude or any provocative action in their dealings with Germany, and to keep in touch with us.

3. At the same time you should call Colonel Beck's attention to the fact that, as the terms of the declaration show, the latter is an interim measure designed to meet what is apprehended to be a possible danger pending the conclusion of the consultations which are now in progress with Poland and Roumania on the subject of the scheme set out in my telegram No. 56.³ Thus the continuance of the guarantee given in today's declaration by His Majesty's Government will be dependent on whether this scheme can in due course be put into operation.

Repeated to Bucharest, Paris, Moscow and Berlin.

¹ No. 573.

² Not printed. See No. 582, note 1.

³ No. 538.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received March 31, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 239 Telegraphic [C 4540/54/18]

ROME, *March 31, 1939, 6.50 p.m.*

Your telegram unnumbered of today.¹

Message was delivered by Counsellor to Count Ciano's Chef de Cabinet immediately after receipt of telegram. Chef de Cabinet said that Count Ciano was not available until later this afternoon but that he would try and telephone to Signor Mussolini as soon as he could trace him. Signor Mussolini is in the country and does not return to wherever he is staying this evening until after 8 p.m.

Counsellor on the advice of Chef de Cabinet also telegraphed communication to Signor Mussolini addressed to Palazzo Venezia. Chef de Cabinet

¹ The reference is presumably to telegram No. 143 to Rome (No. 581).

stated that he could give no other address but that telegram would be forwarded at once.

No. 586

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 156 Telegraphic [C 4529/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

My unnumbered telegram of March 31.¹

The United States Ambassador (to whom I had given advance information about Prime Minister's statement) told me this afternoon that he had just been speaking to the President who thought the statement excellent and said that in his judgement it would have a very great effect. The United States he thought would consider that war was imminent, but the President did not think that this would do any harm.

2. The Ambassador had seen the press messages that were being despatched to the United States and they were all very good.

¹ Not printed. See No. 582, note 1.

No. 587

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 91 Telegraphic [C 4560/15/18]

BUCHAREST, March 31, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs' first reaction to the scheme outlined in your telegram No. 65¹ is that it is essentially sound but that it has been seriously compromised by publicity. He points out that before contemplating pact of mutual assistance with Poland, Roumanian Government would obviously have to consult their allies of the Balkan Entente in order to be sure that the latter would be prepared, in spite of this extension of Roumania's liabilities, to play their part (which was the utmost that Roumania could ask from their . . .² by holding Bulgaria in check in case of need.

He further said that in the past neither Roumania nor Poland had been willing to undertake the alliance now suggested: Roumania because as a weak Power it was more than she could possibly undertake and Poland because of the belief that at any rate in the initial stages of an attack Roumania would be ostensibly (? pro-)³ Hungarian and not German and because she was unwilling to antagonize her Hungarian friends. Furthermore he had a fear that in view of the publicity Polish Government might well embark on negotiations with Germany, as a result of which Germany would obtain an assurance or conviction that, in the event of Germany being at war with the

¹ No. 538.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ This suggested emendation, made in the Foreign Office, appears to be mistaken. The text, however, is clearly wrong, and possibly should read 'in the initial stages an attack against Roumania would be ostensibly Hungarian'.

Western Powers Poland would not intervene: in return for which Germany would pledge herself to observe the eastern *status quo*. When Hungarians entered Ruthenia, Polish Government had without committing the Roumanian Government given their promise of support if attacked. Minister for Foreign Affairs could not feel any great confidence in Poland's policy.

In conclusion Minister for Foreign Affairs said he would consult the King and his colleagues. He expressed gratitude for your communication and said that in his view the essential had already been accomplished in that the determination of the British and French to call a halt to German (? expansion)⁴ and to refuse to be excluded from all interest in events east of the Rhine had now been clearly established. He claimed that Roumania had made it plain that measures to attack would be resisted.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Warsaw, Berlin and Moscow.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 588

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 242 *Telegraphic* [C 3858/15/18]

ROME, March 31, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan from Sir N. Charles.

On parting with Count Ciano this evening I asked whether he could tell me for my own information whether Signor Mussolini was shortly going to reply to Mr. Chamberlain's letter¹ and the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that Signor Mussolini certainly was going to reply very shortly. He might even be signing the letter at that moment.

¹ No. 448.

No. 589

*Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)*¹

No. 232 [C 4528/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to come and see me this morning, and began by apologising for having been obliged, through no fault of my own, to postpone the appointment I had made with him yesterday.

2. I knew, however, that he had seen Sir Alexander Cadogan two days ago², who had kept him informed of the lines on which we were proceeding and which had been rendered necessary by the particular position of the

¹ A summary of the conversation reported in this despatch was telegraphed to Sir W. Seeds at 9.45 p.m. on March 31.

² See No. 565.

Polish Government, of which he was, of course, very well aware. I then told the Ambassador that it had appeared to us of considerable importance to secure the position, pending the conclusion of the consultations in which we were engaged. There had been many rumours in circulation about Germany's intentions against Poland, of which, as the Prime Minister had already stated in the House of Commons, we had no official confirmation. None the less, we thought that it would be valuable at the present juncture that there should be no doubt as to the position of this country. Accordingly, I told him that the Prime Minister was making a statement in the House of Commons this afternoon promising support to the Polish Government in certain circumstances should the need for this arise. I then read M. Maisky the statement that the Prime Minister proposed to make.³

3. His first comment was that the phrase 'lend the Polish Government all support in their power' might be argued to be a phrase capable of being greatly minimised by those who, whether honestly or from a desire to make mischief, would profess doubts as to the genuine character of British intentions.

4. I said that of course nothing could prevent people who wished to make mischief from making it, but that the Polish Government had appeared to welcome our suggestion and that the decision on behalf of His Majesty's Government was, from the point of view of British policy, a grave and momentous decision. M. Maisky agreed and I pointed out to him that this was only an interim arrangement pending the conclusion of the wider discussion.

5. Having regard to the importance of avoiding any unnecessary appearance of divisions between the Governments concerned, I asked the Ambassador whether there was anything that the Prime Minister could say on the lines of assuming that the Soviet Government would not disapprove or even would approve the general line we were taking. I was not surprised that M. Maisky took the opportunity of saying that, as he had not been consulted yesterday, it was obviously impossible for him to say at a moment's notice what the position of his Government would be. It had been defined by M. Stalin a short time ago as assistance against aggression for those who fought for their independence, and therefore they were certainly prepared to help Poland or any other country that was attacked and resisted, but the Soviet Government had no desire to force themselves on anybody. Although they thought it groundless, they understood the fear of the Poles, which was that, if Russian troops came into Poland, Polish conditions were such that the contacts that would be made would probably produce disturbing effects on Polish society.

6. I suggested to M. Maisky that the Prime Minister might say we had every reason to suppose, from the declaration of the principles on which Russian foreign policy rested, that they would not find themselves other than in agreement with our declaration, or something to that effect. The Ambassador did not seem to feel any great difficulty about this being said, for what

³ See No. 582.

it was worth, on the Prime Minister's own authority, and agreed with me when I said that there were plenty of people about trying to make mischief between his Government and our Government, and possibly between his Government, His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government. The purpose of all who wished to stand together, being essentially agreed, must be to avoid giving mischief-makers any encouragement. To this virtuous sentiment M. Maisky readily assented, and I said I looked forward to the opportunity next week of discussing these difficult matters with Colonel Beck and, so far as I could, without breach of Colonel Beck's confidence, I looked forward to a further opportunity of discussing them with M. Maisky. The Ambassador thanked me for what I had said, and repeated that his Government had no wish to force themselves on anybody, and would therefore take no initiative.

7. In reply to an enquiry by the Ambassador as to what was the present position as to the suggested Four-Power declarations, I said that in that form the project was evidently bound to encounter difficulty, but that we were hopeful of being able to achieve substantially the ends we had in view by the rather different approach we were now making.

8. As he was leaving, the Ambassador asked me whether Colonel Beck was proposing to visit France, on his return from this country, but I told him that I had no further information on this matter than had appeared in the press.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 590

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)¹

No. 140 [C 4555/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 31, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Turkish Ambassador to call upon me yesterday evening in order to keep him informed of the line which His Majesty's Government were pursuing. I outlined to M. Aras briefly the arrangement which we are trying to bring about with the Polish and Roumanian Governments, emphasising to him that it was these countries which appeared to be right in the line of the German advance and in which some kind of resistance should be set up. I observed that Poland seemed to be the key to the whole situation, and on this point M. Aras expressed himself as being in strong agreement. I referred briefly to the difficulties which we had encountered in Warsaw in the way of any close association with the Soviet Government, but I said that we were keeping in touch with that Government and hoped to have their sympathy and general support. I said that I should wish to keep in close touch with M. Aras, as we naturally attached the greatest value to our friendship with the Turkish Government.

¹ A summary of the conversation reported in this despatch was telegraphed to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen on April 1.

2. M. Aras then proceeded to develop to me two ideas which he said were entirely his own and which he gave to me unofficially, but hoped that I would consider.

3. In the first place, he referred to the existence of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, and enquired whether it would not be possible to arrange that other countries might accede to it. He had in mind that Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey might be permitted to accede, and implied that they would be ready to do so. He realised that at the moment there would be difficulty about France's accession, but he hoped that, with better Franco-Italian relations, that might come later. If this idea could be realised, that might be the beginning of a Mediterranean *bloc*, which might eventually form a counterpoise to Germany, in a form that Signor Mussolini might not find unacceptable.

4. I find it somewhat difficult to follow M. Aras's thought and I confess that the second idea which he put to me is not entirely clear in all its implications. His suggestion seemed to be, shortly, that there should be a mutual treaty of non-aggression between the Soviet, Poland, Roumania and Turkey. This undertaking would be guaranteed, i.e., the parties to it would agree to combine against any party contravening it, and I understood his idea to be that the arrangement should also be backed by a British guarantee. It was not immediately apparent to me why an undertaking by these countries not to attack each other would really strengthen their common front against German aggression. M. Aras has since explained, in a later conversation which he had with Sir Alexander Cadogan, that in a recent conversation with Herr Funk the latter had given him to understand that Poland and Roumania would be ready to combine against the Soviet. If there were any truth in this, and if the Soviet Government had any suspicion of it, they might well entertain feelings of hostility to Poland and Roumania which might thus be dispelled. Moreover, if the Soviet, Poland and Roumania could be combined in such an arrangement, there was less likelihood of a German-Soviet combination designed to crush Poland and Roumania and to turn on the rest of Europe.

5. I could only assure M. Aras that I would submit both his ideas to careful examination and see whether there was any practical step that we might take towards their realisation if they proved to offer favourable prospects. The first seemed to me more likely to hold possibilities than the second.

6. Incidentally, in his later conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan, M. Aras drew attention to the fact that under the Turkish-Soviet Treaty² neither party was at liberty to make an arrangement with any immediate neighbour of the other party without the latter's consent. Consequently, if there were any idea of forming a larger *bloc* in which Turkey were to be included, which would involve some treaty relationship between Turkey and Poland, this could only be done with the consent of the Soviet, and it was therefore important that Polish-Soviet relations should be put on the best

² The Turkish-Soviet Treaty of 1925 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 125, p. 1001. The provision referred to above is contained in the Protocol of Prolongation of the Treaty in 1929, printed *ibid.*, Vol. 132, p. 878.

possible footing in order that the Soviet might not wish to ban any treaty association between Turkey and Poland.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 591

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 4)

No. 136 [C 4714/19/18]

PRAGUE, March 31, 1939.

My Lord,

As reported in my telegram No. 79,¹ Prague and the historic provinces of the Crown of Bohemia were occupied by German troops on the 15th March. While the precise hour at which they first crossed the frontier may be still a matter of doubt, it is evident that the invasion began before the signature of the declaration by Herr Hitler and President Hacha in Berlin, and probable that it began in the neighbourhood of Mährisch-Ostrau (Moravska Ostrava) before the acceptance of their request to be received had been conveyed to them in Prague.

2. In view of the speed and precision with which the occupation was carried out there can be little doubt, too, that it had been carefully prepared beforehand. No details were left to chance, and I learn that many of the incoming troops arrived with some knowledge of Czech which they had acquired during the past few months. On the first day 10,000 men are said to have entered Prague, and that number was soon greatly increased. But it has varied from day to day as troops are drafted into different parts of the country. The number in the whole of Bohemia and Moravia was estimated by a good source on the 22nd March at 160,000, taken from units which at full strength would have amounted to 250,000, a figure which has in consequence sometimes been mentioned. A thousand road specialists are also said to have arrived within a day or so of the occupation, which is another indication of its premeditated nature.

3. The occupation of the Bohemian provinces differed from the occupation of Austria last year in that the troops entered this country more prepared to meet opposition and to quell supposed disorders—a precaution which proved unnecessary as no resistance, nor even much outward hostility, was shown by the population—nor had there been any disorders worthy of the name to suppress. No time was lost in seizing the key points of the town, the Government buildings were soon under military control and the Czech troops disarmed. Bad weather on the 15th March prevented an air display, but on the following days a number of aircraft of various types were flown at low altitudes and at frequent intervals over the town. It is estimated that not more than 150 aeroplanes took part in these flights. On the 19th March a great military parade was staged in the Wenzelplatz in the centre of the town, and nothing was spared to bring home to the population the overwhelming force at Germany's disposal, though the military material employed has for the

¹ No. 254.

most part been of old design and has made a poor impression on informed Czechs. The bearing of the troops when off duty has left nothing to be desired, and I am told that their attitude to the Czech troops whose barracks they invaded has not been unfriendly. Even the Czech Jewish soldiers have been treated with consideration.

4. The German army was, as was to have been expected, soon followed by the police, and the Gestapo got quickly to work. Seven large villas belonging to the Jewish Petschek family are understood to have been requisitioned as quarters for the Gestapo personnel, and it is difficult and, indeed, impossible, to credit the statement made by the 'Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro' on the 21st March that no arrests had been made on the part of the German authorities. On one occasion the Gestapo got so far out of hand as to follow one of their victims into the precincts of the Swedish Legation, firing as they went. My Swedish colleague had difficulty in evicting them, and had to push one of them downstairs.

5. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that 'The Times' leading article of the 23rd March painted a somewhat exaggerated picture when it said that 'the latest reports from Bohemia and Moravia tell of spying and delation, imprisonment without trial—the number of arrests is now estimated to be over 18,000—the break-up of homes, the pitiless persecution of honourable political opponents'. Spying and delation are, of course, an inevitable part of Gestapo methods, as also is imprisonment without trial, and tales are heard—with what substantiation I cannot say—of house-to-house searches at night. But on the whole I have the impression that the Gestapo are going about their business, at any rate in Prague, with greater circumspection than might have been anticipated or than certainly was anticipated by the Czech population, which expected conditions in Prague shortly to resemble conditions in post-'Anschluss' Vienna. From all I have heard—and I must emphasise the difficulty of obtaining reliable information—it would appear that the more prominent Czechs have hitherto been largely left alone, or, if action has been taken against them, it has been confined to questioning. M. Hajek, for example, who, as head of the Propaganda Department in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs under the Benes régime and a renowned supporter of Dr. Benes, presumably held a high place on any black list, was, indeed, arrested and questioned, but he was subsequently released. The same course was pursued in the case of Captain Emanuel Voska, who was head of the Czech Mafia during the war, and also of the well-known journalist, M. Peroutka. Again, Dr. Lany, who, as Chief Justice of Bohemia, was responsible for the prosecution of many Sudeten Germans, has been closely questioned, but not arrested. Report has been current of the arrest of a number of prominent Czechs, in particular M. Bechyne, the Socialist Deputy Prime Minister in Dr. Hodza's Cabinet, and Dr. Zenkl, the former Mayor of Prague and later a Cabinet Minister. This may be true of Dr. Bechyne,² but I am reliably informed that Dr. Zenkl is free. In fact, there seems to have

² *Note in original:* I have since heard that M. Bechyne was arrested, but subsequently released.

been hitherto nothing in the nature of a wholesale round-up of prominent Czech exponents of the Benes policy. It is generally believed that such arrests as have taken place have been rather of the smaller fry in the country districts, and particularly of Communists. The Communist leaders themselves are said to have disappeared by the time the Germans arrived.

6. How many have actually been made and how many of those arrested are still detained, it is impossible to estimate. 'The Times' figure of 18,000 must be pure guess-work. It was widely believed that 4,000 or 5,000 persons were taken in the first day or so and sent off to a concentration camp established at Milovice, some 25 miles from Prague. Others affirm that three concentration camps have been set up in different parts of the Protectorate, but I must report such stories with all reserve. It is generally thought that the situation becomes progressively worse the greater the distance from Prague. In Prague itself, though the Jews live in a state of terror, nothing has occurred in the streets such as disgraced the occupation of Vienna, partly, no doubt, thanks to the absence of a vicious local population in sympathy with the persecutors, and partly perhaps, as a result of deliberate policy. No synagogue has been destroyed in Prague. In Moravia, on the other hand, where there are more Sudetens with old scores to pay off, the situation seems to have been more acute. Looting occurred immediately after the occupation, and synagogues both at Brünn and Olmütz were burnt down.

7. There is plenty of evidence that the German authorities are making a show of placating the Czechs and that that is their present line of propaganda. In his order to the troops of the 15th March, for example, Herr Hitler stated that he expected every soldier to regard himself *vis-à-vis* the inhabitants in the occupied territories not as a foe but as a representative of the will of the Reich to restore order. On the 26th March a military ceremony was held in the Old Town Square when General Blaskowitz laid a wreath on the tomb of the Czech Unknown Warrior. The local German press has uttered assurances that it will be no part of German policy to denationalise the Czechs, and I understand that Herr Hitler gave such assurances to President Hacha at the meeting in Berlin. On the 25th March the 'Zeit' published an interview on similar lines [? to that] given to the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' by Herr Henlein, who now holds the rank of head of the civil administration of Bohemia under General Blaskowitz. Herr Henlein said that he regarded it as his first task to create sound relations between the Czech and German peoples and to bury the hatred cultivated for years by the previous Czech leaders. He believed that the broad Czech masses would recognise the honourable desire of the Germans for mutual understanding, more particularly when they came to see the economic advantages that would result from their place in Greater Germany.

8. Another sign of the apparent desire of the German Government to make an appeal to the Czech masses is seen in the establishment of free food kitchens in Prague to feed the hungry. This, and the advertisement given to it, has, in point of fact, been strongly resented by the Czechs, who regard it as blatant and insulting propaganda and contrast it with the manner in which Czech

army material is, they say, being requisitioned and sent off nightly in van-loads to Germany, as also with the manner in which the local shops are being rapidly bought out by the hungry German troops with the assistance of an unfairly favourable conversion rate of marks into crowns. In fact, it may be said that all these gestures on the German side are regarded with the utmost scepticism by the Czechs. They frankly do not believe that the leopard has changed its spots. On the contrary, they contemplate the future with gloom and apprehension, fully convinced that they will be mercilessly exploited. Their scepticism is shown in deeds as well as words, for they (like the German soldiers) are buying all they can against the day when they may have no more crowns to spend or nothing to spend them on.

9. As to the general attitude of the Czech population, I have heard of country villages where the occupation is said to be regarded with indifference. That, however, is certainly not the attitude of the population of Prague, where acute distress is general, though it has taken the form of a strange impassivity and resignation. I have a first-hand story of the manner in which the news of the invasion was received in a Czech barracks. Every soldier wept like a child. Tears, in fact, were not an uncommon sight in the streets, and one has the impression that the Czechs are completely broken in spirit. It is that, I feel, rather than an innate sense of discipline, which is responsible for the absence of any acts of desperation. No deeds of violence have been brought to my notice, and one of the few exhibitions of spirit of which I have heard was that of an announcer who described over the wireless the military parade on the 19th March. His remarks appear to have lacked the deference due to the German army. On the other hand, it was surprising that General Syrový himself should have been present officially at the parade and have found no pretext on which to excuse himself. His presence shattered widespread reports that he had committed suicide.

10. There are those who say that the Czech temperament is better suited to passive than to active resistance, and that a sullen passive resistance and a certain amount of discreet sabotage will be their response to the violation of their land. Such statements, though necessarily speculative, are at least plausible. At the moment the bitterness of the Czechs is divided between the invading Germans and the Western democracies, who by their action last summer are thought to have brought the country to its present pass. The memory of Lord Runciman is regarded with particular dislike, and the illusory guarantees and public suggestions that by accepting the advice given in September the Czecho-Slovaks would secure peace and independence for their diminished and thereafter defenceless country rankle deeply in their spirit. If the Germans possessed the gift of tact, they might turn such sentiments to their profit. But it would be a difficult task to eradicate the hatred that now possesses every Czech heart, and for my part I doubt whether the Germans will ever succeed in doing so. Indeed, despite the feeling of having been betrayed by the French and let down by the British, the Czechs, for lack of other friends, were showing some recovery of friendship for France as well as England prior to the 15th March, and this recovery may continue.

11. As reported in my telegram No. 98³ of the 16th March, executive power in the Protectorate is for the moment entrusted to the German army. General Blaskowitz holds command in Bohemia and General List in Moravia, while Herr Conrad Henlein has been attached to General Blaskowitz as head of the civil administration in Bohemia, and Herr Bürckel holds a similar appointment under General List in Moravia. Dr. Ritter, of the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has been sent down from Berlin to liquidate the Czech Ministry for Foreign Affairs and to hold unofficial contact with the Diplomatic Corps, but his writ runs only for Bohemia. In Moravia matters affecting foreigners have been entrusted to Dr. Eisenlohr, the former German Minister in Prague.

12. Military control was, it seems, never intended to be more than a temporary measure and civil control is expected to come into force in a short time. Meanwhile, the constitutional position of the Protectorate has already been laid down in the decree of the 16th March, a translation of which was enclosed in my despatch No. 126⁴ of the 17th March. Briefly, the Protectorate is in theory autonomous and self-administrative, but in practice subject to the strict supervision of the Reich. This is to be exercised by a Reich Protector, who, by a subsequent decree of the 22nd March, is directly subordinate to the German Chancellor. Baron von Neurath has been appointed Reich Protector and the Sudeten leader, Herr Karl Hermann Frank, his State Secretary. It would appear that the inhabitants of the Protectorate of German race are outside the purview of the autonomous authorities, as they have become automatically full German citizens, whereas the remainder are only to be nationals of the Protectorate.

13. There are some who believe that one of the objects of putting the German army in control during the first weeks of the occupation was to avoid a repetition of the excesses which took place in Vienna immediately after the Austrian 'Anschluss'. Such persons fear that the situation will deteriorate as soon as the army hands over to the civilians. But if military control has prevented excesses on the part of the Nazi extremists, it has equally set a rigid limit to the exercise of any powers by the Czech authorities. I learn on good authority that Herr Bartmann (one of General Blaskowitz's subordinates who holds an office known as governmental president) visited the President of the Council, M. Beran, shortly after his arrival and made it clear that so long as General Blaskowitz remained in Prague he expected to be kept fully informed of all the deliberations of the Czech Government. Meanwhile, a number of important decrees have been issued by the military authorities. An early measure was to order the surrender of all arms in private hands, though these have subsequently been returned. Private wireless transmitting sets also had to be surrendered. The sale or transfer of publishing and printing establishments was prohibited without permission. So far as the press itself is concerned, no orders have been published, but in fact all the papers in the country, whether written in Czech or German, are now 'gleichge-

³ No. 289.

⁴ Not printed. The decree is summarized in Prague telegram No. 112 (No. 301).

schaltet,' and everything published closely followed the Goebbels line. On the 15th March an order was issued by General von Brauchitsch laying down that the German Penal Code should be applied in respect of all German nationals in the occupied provinces, and in certain cases in respect of all other inhabitants of the provinces. A subsequent decree has laid down that, pending clarification of the position by the Berlin authorities, all proceedings against German nationals are to be stopped or limited to what is strictly necessary in the interests of general security. A further military decree laid down that German and Czech should both be official languages throughout the Protectorate. Measures have also been taken to prevent a rise in prices, but these appear to have been enacted by the local civil authorities. The Czech population is kept almost completely in the dark as to views held abroad, since foreign newspapers have ceased to be obtainable, except by a few privileged foreigners.

14. Meanwhile a beginning has been made with the reformation of the Czech constitutional organisation. An attempt to exploit the confusion immediately following the occupation seems to have been made by the Fascist leader, General Gayda, who called together a Czech national committee on the 15th March and appealed to all sections of the community to group themselves under his leadership. Nothing more has been heard of that venture and there is reason to believe that the General, in whose political integrity and judgment few have confidence and whose full Aryan antecedence is even in doubt, may shortly fade out of the picture.

15. On the 21st March Parliament was dissolved and President Hacha announced the formation of a Committee of the National Community whose task it would be to unite all political groups in a single movement which would be in a position to lay down the new lines of political life. Fifty members were nominated by the President to the new committee. They were drawn from all classes, but in his opening address Dr. Hacha stated that he had limited the choice to persons unconnected hitherto with internal politics. They are therefore mostly unknown names. At the same time, Dr. Hacha reserved the right to modify the composition of the committee as he saw fit. Nominated as it is by the President, the new committee is evidently intended to play an important role. It has been given the use of the Parliament buildings for its deliberations and it has already appointed an executive committee and a large number of sub-committees dealing with the various aspects of national life. Its precise constitutional position is less easy to gauge, but in the absence of a Parliament it may be designed to carry on that body's functions in better conformity with the 'Führer-Prinzip'.

16. So far as political parties are concerned, it has been decided to introduce the one-party system. The Government itself is likely to be recast shortly, but, as Dr. Hacha has publicly stated, this must await the arrival of Baron von Neurath, whose approval is required by article 5 of the constitutional decree for the appointment of members of the Government. It is anticipated that M. Beran will retire, but his successor is still in doubt. M. Havelka, the chief of the President's Chancery, has, I am told, been offered

the appointment and refused it. Another name mentioned is Dr. Chvalkovsky.

17. A word should be said as to the position of the Jews. Under article 2 of the Constitutional decree the Nuremberg laws apply only to the inhabitants of German race, and it is thought that the policy of the German Government is to leave it, at any rate in the first instance, to the Czechs to deal with the Jewish problem. As has been reported in more than one despatch from this mission, a beginning had already been made before the occupation. Since it took place the pace has grown hotter. A few examples may suffice. On the 15th March the Prague Chamber of Lawyers excluded non-Aryans from its membership. Similar action was taken a few days later by the Grain Monopoly. Again, Jews have by order of the Bohemian Provincial Committee (a Czech body) been dismissed from public employment in the province. In fact, a day has scarcely passed without it being reported that some organisation or another has excluded Jews from its ranks. On the 24th March at the first working meeting of the Committee of the National Community the President, M. Hruby, declared that the Jewish problem must be settled without delay, and it was agreed that concrete plans should be worked out by the economic and financial sub-committees. The next day the economic sub-committee produced a report in which the Government was recommended to take all measures to prevent the transfer of non-Aryan property. The term 'non-Aryan' was defined as applying to persons who themselves or whose ancestors up to the third degree were of non-Aryan origin. It was further recommended that a register should be made by the 15th April of all non-Aryan property. How far measures such as these will be regarded as sufficient by the German Government, it is of course impossible to say, but there are many who think that Herr Hitler is determined to rid not only Germany proper but the Protectorate as well of all Jews before the year is out. It is clear in any case that Jews will find no resting place in Bohemia under the new dispensation.

18. Finally, it may be asked what motives induced the German Government to take the final step of incorporating the Bohemian provinces in the Reich, when it was perfectly clear that they had only to submit a demand to the Czecho-Slovak Government, whether of a political, economic or military nature, for it to be immediately executed. While this is a matter more within the purview of His Majesty's Embassy in Berlin, a few points may be suggested as they appear to an observer in Prague. The pretext of the victimisation of the German inhabitants of this country may be dismissed at once. Even if such allegations had been true the German Government had ample means of remedying the situation in a less drastic fashion. Similarly, the story that serious disorders had broken out was a pure invention, a fact which, I am told, is now fully appreciated by the German army of occupation. On the other hand, the German Government had a number of reasons for coveting their neighbour's land. Probably they found it intensely irritating to see the map of their own country with a wedge of alien territory thrust into its midst. Again, they may have felt that physical occupation would be a surer

safeguard than any lesser degree of control when plans were put in hand for penetration further east. Again, they may well have felt that here was a rich country at their very doors only too ripe for exploitation. They may also have been influenced by a desire to recreate the link with Vienna which, as Herr Hitler said recently to an informant of Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, has always been dependent on Bohemia and Moravia. Finally, they may have at the back of their minds still more far-reaching ideas such as were mooted last year and attributed, I believe, to Field-Marshal Göring—namely, to found a new and solely German colony in the Bohemian provinces by a wholesale eviction of the Slav population, perhaps to a future Ukraina.

19. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
BASIL NEWTON

No. 592

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 4)

No. 392 [C 4676/3356/18]

PARIS, March 31, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Foreign Office telegram No. 105¹ and Paris telegram No. 136² has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹ No. 537.

² No. 558.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 592

PARIS, le 31 mars, 1939

Par note remise au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères le 28 mars 1939, l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne a bien voulu donner connaissance au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères des instructions adressées aux représentants britanniques à Varsovie et à Bucarest relatives à la démarche que les Gouvernements français et anglais se sont mis d'accord pour effectuer auprès des Gouvernements polonais et roumain.

En accusant réception de cette communication le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a l'honneur de faire savoir à l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne qu'ayant adressé les mêmes instructions à l'Ambassadeur de France à Varsovie et au Ministre de France à Bucarest, il les a priés en même temps de se concerter avec leur collègue anglais en vue d'effectuer auprès du Gouvernement auprès duquel ils sont accrédités la démarche visée par ces instructions.

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 11)**No. 106 [N 1865/92/38]*

MOSCOW, March 31, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that the Right Hon. R. S. Hudson, M.P., Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade, who was accompanied by Mrs. Hudson, arrived in Moscow by train on the morning of the 23rd March with the other members of his mission, Sir T. St. Quintin Hill, Comptroller-General of the Department of Overseas Trade, Mr. Lyal of that department, and Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. A special coach had been placed at the disposal of the mission from the frontier station of Niegoreloye, and an English-speaking official of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Hudson there and accompanied them to Moscow. Among the Soviet officials who, like my wife and myself, were present at the station were M. Potyomkin, the Assistant People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, M. Barkov, the Director of the Protocol Department, and M. Stepanov, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Trade, representing M. Mikoyan.

2. After lunching at the Embassy, Mr. Hudson, whom I accompanied, went to pay courtesy calls on M. Litvinov, M. Potyomkin and M. Mikoyan. With the latter it was arranged that conversations should be opened on the following afternoon at 4 p.m. despite the fact that it was a rest day, and that I had been given to understand by M. Litvinov that it was M. Mikoyan's habit to take full advantage of such opportunities for rest. The substance of the conversations which Mr. Hudson and I had with MM. Litvinov and Mikoyan is recorded in my telegram No. 44¹ of the 25th March. In the evening the members of the mission, my wife and I and the staff of the Embassy, as the guests of the Soviet Government, attended at the Opera House a performance of the opera 'Ivan Susanin', formerly known as 'A Life for the Tsar', but recently remodelled on more patriotic and democratic lines.

3. On the following morning members of the mission, at the invitation of the Soviet authorities, visited the Kremlin Museum and Lenin's mausoleum, and, after lunching in the country, returned to Moscow for the conversations which it had been arranged should take place at the Commissariat for Foreign Trade and which lasted for three and a half hours. A record of these and subsequent conversations on the subject of Anglo-Soviet trade will no doubt be submitted to Your Lordship in due course by Mr. Hudson. In the evening my wife and I gave a dinner-party at the Embassy, to which were invited, in addition to the members of the mission, a number of heads of missions in Moscow, including the Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian Ministers. The Finnish Minister was unavoidably prevented by illness from being present, but was able to see Mr. Hudson at the Embassy on the 27th March before the latter's departure for Helsingfors.

4. On the morning of the 25th March, following a discussion between

¹ No. 519.

experts, a full meeting of the Soviet and British delegations was held at the Commissariat for Foreign Trade prior to a luncheon-party given by M. Mikoyan to the members of the mission, and to which my wife and I and members of the Embassy staff were invited. A further discussion between experts took place in the afternoon. In the evening the members of the mission and the staff of the Embassy were the guests of M. Litvinov in the former Imperial box at the Opera House for a performance of the ballet 'Swan Lake'. Mlle Ulanova, the *prima ballerina*, was specially summoned from the Leningrad Ballet Theatre to dance on this occasion.

5. On the 26th March further conversations took place in the morning at the Commissariat for Foreign Trade between Mr. Hudson and M. Mikoyan, and in the afternoon, at the latter's special invitation, members of the mission witnessed the showing of a Soviet film. In the evening the members of the mission and the staff of the Embassy attended at the theatre, as the guests of the Soviet authorities, a performance of the opera 'Eugène Onegin'.

6. On the final day of Mr. Hudson's visit my wife and I gave a luncheon-party at the Embassy for the members of the mission and Soviet officials, the latter including MM. Mikoyan, Litvinov, Potyomkin, Stepanov and ten others. In the afternoon I accompanied Mr. Hudson to an interview which had been arranged in the Kremlin with M. Molotov, the President of the Council of People's Commissars, and at which MM. Mikoyan and Litvinov were also present. I had been given to understand that M. Stalin might look in at this interview, but apparently an attack of sore throat intervened at the last moment. In the evening a further entertainment was offered by the Soviet Government in the form of a visit to the Gypsy Theatre, after which Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and the members of the mission left by train, again in a special coach, for Leningrad, on the way to Helsingfors. MM. Potyomkin, Stepanov and Barkov were again present at the station, and, as on the occasion of the arrival of the mission, a magnificent bouquet of flowers from M. Litvinov's conservatory was presented to Mrs. Hudson. It was the intention of the mission to utilise for sight-seeing the enforced halt of some eight hours in Leningrad on the 28th March, caused by the fact that there is no direct train connexion between Moscow and Helsingfors.

7. As Your Lordship will have gathered from my telegrams No. 43² of the 23rd March and No. 47³ of the 27th March, Mr. Hudson would appear to have been successful in obtaining from the Soviet Government a promise to undertake further negotiations in London, which, I understand, will be conducted on the Soviet side by M. Maisky, on the subject of Anglo-Soviet trade relations, and an agreement in principle to a debt settlement. Though, as stated in the latter telegram, M. Mikoyan, who is undoubtedly a hard bargainer, expressed doubts as to whether such negotiations would succeed, I would add that, according to Mr. Dunlop, Third Secretary at this Embassy, whose services as interpreter during the discussions were invaluable, M. Mikoyan, in conversation with Mr. Hudson after luncheon at this Embassy on the 27th March, remarked that there could be no question of the negotia-

² No. 505.

³ No. 531.

tions in London not leading to an agreement, since failure was out of the question. M. Mikoyan added, so I understand, that Mr. Hudson's arguments had weighed with him, and declared that he was willing to consider giving an order for herrings, and also for some consumers' goods such as yarn, though a long credit would be asked for the latter, as this was not an article really needed by the Soviet Government. I should mention that a most friendly atmosphere prevailed during the discussions, and that Mr. Hudson was soon on a basis of excellent personal relations with M. Mikoyan, who, I think, found his dealings with that most efficient delegation a highly stimulating experience.

8. Beyond a brief announcement of Mr. Hudson's arrival no mention was made of the mission in the Soviet press during their stay here. I gather, however, that it is not uncommon for the Soviet press to maintain complete silence with regard to the visits of foreign missions, whatever their importance. Since Mr. Hudson's departure there has been no reference at all to his visit in the press, apart from the publication of the Tass communiqué referred to in my telegram No. 48⁴ of the 27th March and a translation of which, extracted from the 'Journal de Moscou' is enclosed. This translation has been chosen as representing the Soviet interpretation of the Russian original. As explained in my telegram No. 49⁵ of the 28th March, it was impossible for me to obtain, in accordance with the desire expressed in your telegram No. 38⁶ of the 27th March, the omission of all passages in the communiqué relating to political matters, owing to the fact that the communiqué had already been issued to the provincial press, and that, as explained by M. Litvinov, any attempt to stop publication everywhere would have been impracticable and would also have defeated its own ends.

9. I have written to M. Litvinov thanking him for the generous hospitality which was shown to members of this Embassy on the occasion of Mr. Hudson's visit, and stating that I would not fail to inform Your Lordship of the personal friendliness shown by His Excellency and the members of the Soviet Government to the mission, as well as of the unremitting care taken of it. This care included, besides the special railway coaches alluded to above, the supply of two motor cars and Intourist guides for sight-seeing during the whole stay, and also buffets at all the theatrical entertainments.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

⁴ No. 533.

⁵ No. 545.

⁶ No. 532.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 593

Communiqué de l'Agence Tass

Pendant son séjour à Moscou, M. Hudson, Secrétaire parlementaire pour le commerce d'outre-mer de la Grande-Bretagne, eut plusieurs entretiens avec le Commissaire du peuple au Commerce extérieur, A. Mikoian, et avec le Commissaire du peuple aux Affaires étrangères, M. Litvinov, et fut égale-

ment reçu par V. Molotov, Président du Conseil des Commissaires du peuple de l'U.R.S.S.

Les relations commerciales actuelles entre l'U.R.S.S. et la Grande-Bretagne et les possibilités de leur développement ultérieur furent discutées à fond. Les deux parties exposèrent leur attitude; au cours de la discussion, il se révéla nombre de divergences essentielles, lesquelles, on le suppose, se réduiront au minimum au cours de pourparlers ultérieurs à Londres.

Un échange amical d'opinions sur la politique internationale permit aux deux parties de faire réciproquement connaître les points de vue des gouvernements des deux États, et de faire apparaître des points de contact entre leurs attitudes dans le domaine de la consolidation de la paix.

Le contact personnel établi entre le représentant autorisé du Gouvernement britannique et les membres du Gouvernement soviétique contribuera sans doute à la consolidation des relations soviéto-britanniques ainsi qu'à une collaboration internationale en vue de la solution du problème de la paix.

No. 594

*Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 1, 11.50 a.m.)*

No. 214 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4563/54/18]

BERLIN, April 1, 1939

Your circular letter (? telegram)¹ unnumbered of March 31.²

Controlled opinion in this country is reserved pending Herr Hitler's speech at Wilhelmshaven this evening when he is expected to deliver a vigorous retort and this morning's press has not reacted as violently as might have been expected.

The mass of people as in September do not yet realise the gravity of the situation. Nevertheless informed National Socialists, who are anxious for good relations with Great Britain, are very worried indeed at the prospect of a war, which will no doubt be strengthened by the terms of the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament. This may be all to the good, but an impression may percolate to Herr Hitler on whose decision alone . . .³ rests and make him think twice. Comparison is unfortunately being made with May 21 and therefore if Herr Hitler does climb down it seems most important that our press should, if possible, not crow over him.

Polish Embassy continues to maintain their [*sic*] attitude of calm and informed me last night that it was still of the opinion that Herr Hitler realises that aggression on Poland is a very different proposition from aggression on Czecho-Slovakia and that therefore he will not court disaster.

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris and Rome.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² Not printed. See No. 582, note 1.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 595

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 1, 5.0 p.m.)

No. 100 Telegraphic [C 4607/15/18]

WARSAW, April 1, 1939, 2.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 70.¹

I communicated this morning to the Minister for Foreign Affairs relevant passages. M. Beck expressed his entire concurrence with view of His Majesty's Government, and assured me we could rely on Polish Government doing nothing provocative.

He confirmed what I had reported in my telegram No. 96² that the German Government had informed him that they would consider any Polish occupation of Danzig as a *casus belli* and that he had replied that the Polish Government would equally consider any German aggression on Danzig in the same light.

He had himself given the *mot d'ordre* to Polish press not to show too much extravagant enthusiasm for Prime Minister's declaration and he felt that you would not desire any over-charging of the atmosphere. This did not however mean that the Polish Government and the people did not appreciate deeply the declaration.

He is to consult the President of the Republic and Marshal Smigly-Rydz this evening regarding proposals in your telegram No. 56³ and will let me know should there be anything of importance to tell me before his departure tomorrow.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 584.

² No. 579.

³ No. 538.

No. 596

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 1, 5.0 p.m.)

No. 244 Telegraphic [C 3858/15/18]

ROME, April 1, 1939, 4.20 p.m.

Following is text in translation of Signor Mussolini's reply¹ which was handed to me at Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning at noon.

¹ The text in the original Italian is as follows:

IL CAPO DEL GOVERNO, ROMA. 31 marzo, 1939. XVII.

Caro Signor Chamberlain,

Ho ricevuto e ho letto con molto interesse il Messaggio che mi è stato indirizzato il 20 corrente.

Nel Vostro Messaggio vi richiamate ai più recenti avvenimenti dell' Europa Centrale e alle ripercussioni che essi hanno avuto nel Vostro e in altri Paesi, e fate seguire alcune considerazioni e apprezzamenti, riportandovi anche al Vostro discorso del 17 marzo. Voi ricordate pure l'appello rivoltomi nel settembre scorso, e l'incontro di Monaco e le decisioni

Dear Mr. Chamberlain,

I have received and have read with great interest the message which you sent to me on March 20.²

In your message you refer to the more recent events in Central Europe and to the repercussions which they have had in your and in other countries and you proceed with some considerations and appreciations, referring also to your speech of March 17. You remind me also of appeal addressed to me last September and of meeting at Munich and decisions which resulted from it and you express the hope that it may be possible for me to intervene once again in order to relieve existing tension and to restore confidence. You refer also to conversations in Rome of last January.

Equally with you I remember with pleasure and satisfaction those conversations; and I shall reply with all frankness to invitation addressed to me.

You are aware from the various and repeated expressions of my thought, of the opinion which I hold, and not from now only, regarding present situation and profound reasons which are causing the existing uneasiness and unrest; you know equally the position I have always taken and now take as regards problem of peace and means to preserve it. In my speech last Sunday I once again expressed my opinion both concerning events in Central Europe and those which from far had led up to them, as well as regarding question of peace.

In reply to message addressed to me by you I can only refer again to my declarations. I repeat to you what I said publicly and that is that I

che ne seguirono, ed esprime la speranza che mi sia possibile di intervenire nuovamente affine di alleviare la tensione esistente e di ristabilire la fiducia. Accennate anche alle conversazioni di Roma del gennaio scorso.

Ricordo al pari di Voi con piacere e soddisfazione tal conversazioni; e risponderò con tutta franchezza all' invito rivoltomi.

Voi conoscete attraverso varie e ripetute manifestazioni del mio pensiero, il giudizio che porto, e non da ora, sulla situazione europea e sulle cause profonde che determinano il disagio e il malessere esistenti. Voi sapete ugualmente qual posizione io abbia sempre preso e prenda di fronte al problema della pace ed ai mezzi per preservarla. Nel mio discorso di domenica scorsa, sia sugli avvenimenti dell' Europa Centrale, che sui loro più lontani antecedenti, come infine sulla pace, ho espresso una volta di più il mio pensiero.

In risposta al Messaggio da Voi indirizzatomi, io non posso che richiamarmi alle mie dichiarazioni. Ripeto a Voi quello che ho detto pubblicamente, e cioè che considero necessario un lungo periodo di pace per salvare nel suo sviluppo la civiltà europea. Questa la mia profonda convinzione. Attualmente però, e pur apprezzando il Vostro invito, non ritengo di poter prendere iniziative prima che i diritti dell' Italia siano stati riconosciuti. Vi rendete facilmente conto delle ragioni.

Nel mio discorso ho anche indicato e specificato i problemi italiani nei confronti della Francia e la loro natura coloniale. Con questo credo di aver facilitato la discussione eventuale di tali problemi.

Vogliate credermi,
Vostro,

MUSSOLINI

² No. 448.

consider a long period of peace necessary for the salvation of European civilisation and its development. This is my profound conviction. But actually and while appreciating your invitation I do not consider that I can take the initiative before Italy's rights have been recognised. You will easily appreciate reasons for this.

In my speech I also indicated and specified Italian problems *vis-à-vis* France and their colonial nature.³ With this I believe I have facilitated eventual discussion of those problems.

Believe me,
Yours,
MUSSOLINI

³ See No. 381, note 1.

No. 597

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 2, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 51 Telegraphic [C 4575/54/18]

MOSCOW, April 1, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 51.¹

Moscow press published full reports yesterday of proceedings in the House of Commons but omitted any mention of Prime Minister's expressed belief that Soviet Government understood and appreciated principles on which His Majesty's Government were acting.

2. I have just seen M. Litvinov who made it quite clear that His Majesty's Government's action is misunderstood and not at all appreciated. He claimed at first that we had never informed the Soviet Government that proposed four-Power declaration had been dropped: I contested this and an examination of Soviet Ambassador's telegrams from London eventually absolved us of that charge by producing confirmation of paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 46.² Nevertheless he said fact remained that in response to our approach Soviet Government had first suggested six-Power Conference and secondly agreed to sign a four-Power declaration: each proposal had been summarily dropped. Now His Majesty's Government of their own initiative were engaged on a new plan of which he knew little. Soviet Government had had enough and would henceforward stand apart free of any commitments.

3. I denied that His Majesty's Government were in any way responsible for failure of the two proposals in question which as he well knew failed only because of certain international suspicions which seemed to clog every means of approach. Surely in Soviet Union where we were always attacked for alleged capitulations a welcome should be accorded to a momentous change of front. Soviet Ambassador had been and would be kept informed in accordance with our desire to maintain close touch with Soviet Government.

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation reported in No. 589. See No. 589, note 1.

² No. 565.

4. But he was not to be moved and in spite of my argument that Prime Minister's statement covered only an interim arrangement and must not therefore be picked to pieces he expressed doubts whether we would regard attack on Danzig or Corridor as threatening Poland's independence. In any case we could pursue our own policy: Soviet Government would stand aside—a course which might possibly be in their best interests.

Repeated [to] Bucharest, Berlin, Paris and Warsaw.

No. 598

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 74 Telegraphic [C 4665/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 1, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

The Polish Ambassador, while welcoming the declaration made yesterday, suggested this morning that it might give a wrong impression to those who wished to minimise its importance. He feared that paragraph 2 of the statement might be distorted so as to weaken the position of Poland *vis-à-vis* Germany, by encouraging Hitler to demand negotiations, and put forward maximum demands in regard to Danzig, the Corridor and Silesia.

2. No important questions were in dispute between Germany and Poland, and the arrangements for German transit across the Corridor were working smoothly. As regards Danzig, it was true that in present circumstances some other system for ensuring the maintenance of the Free City might have to be found, but it had been understood at the time of the Polish-German Declaration of 1934 that Danzig should never be allowed to interrupt the good relations between the two countries.

3. The Ambassador stated in reply to a question that there had been no recent negotiations with Germany. The German Government had put forward no definite complaints or demands as regards either the Corridor or Danzig. At the most, there had been occasional feelers.

4. The Ambassador hoped that we would try to make the press realise that the cure for the international problem in Eastern Europe was not to be found in immediate negotiations between Germany and Poland, and that no such negotiations were at present in prospect. They would indeed be impossible on the basis of the claims which some papers had attributed to Germany.

5. The Ambassador was assured that paragraph 2 of the Prime Minister's declaration had no ulterior significance. Its object was to lead up to a denunciation of the German practice of enforcing demands under threat of force instead of by free negotiation. The declaration contained no reservation, and it was not the intention of His Majesty's Government to force or even to urge the Polish Government to enter into negotiations with Germany if they did not think this necessary or opportune. We merely asked that if such negotiations should take place, we should be kept fully informed of their nature and progress.

Repeated to Bucharest, Berlin, Paris and Moscow.

No. 599

*Minute by Sir O. Sargent*¹

[C 5258/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 1, 1939

The Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires called to-day to discuss recent developments. I outlined briefly to him our scheme to guarantee Poland and Roumania. In doing so I realised that he had a very hazy, if not mistaken, idea of what our scheme was. He seemed to think that our guarantee was to be given only to Poland, and that we would only intervene on behalf of Roumania if and when Poland did so. In fact, he feared that as a result Roumania would find herself as he put it *à la remorque* of Poland.

I did my best to disabuse him of this idea and to explain to him that we were treating Poland and Roumania on a footing of complete equality, but I did not mention to him the fact that we were not asking for any reciprocity from Roumania as we were from Poland. I also explained to him that yesterday's declaration regarding Poland did not in any way mean that we had lost interest in Roumania. While realising that Roumania would want to consult her partners in the Balkan Entente before taking a definite decision on the British scheme, I expressed the hope that it would be possible for the Roumanian Government to give us their views on this scheme during Col. Beck's visit to London, so that during the visit the scheme might be discussed in all its aspects.

I asked whether the Roumanian Minister would be back in London during the visit, but M. Florescu said that, according to his present information, M. Tilea was not leaving Roumania until Thursday, and was then going to spend Easter with his family in Zürich before returning to London.

M. Florescu, in discussing our scheme, was anxious to know whether the proposed guarantee would operate against an attack by Hungary as well as by Germany. I assured him that if Roumanian independence were threatened by Hungary, who obviously in that case would be collaborating with Germany, the guarantee contemplated under our scheme would apply.

O. G. SARGENT

¹ A summary of the conversation recorded in this minute was telegraphed to Sir R. Hoare on the night of April 1-2.

No. 600

Letter from Mr. Strang to Sir R. Clive (Brussels)

[C 3766/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 1, 1939

I see that in the course of the conversations between your Military Attaché and the Netherlands Military Attaché reported in your despatch No. 154¹ of March 21, Colonel Evekink suggested an exchange of military information

¹ No. 477.

between the several General Staffs via the medium of the Military Attachés in the countries concerned. Blake replied that he did not know how such a proposition would be received in London and that in any case the suggestion would have to come from the Dutch.

2. In view of this conversation I think you should know that His Majesty's Government have decided in principle in favour of holding Staff conversations with the Dutch in due course, if the Dutch are willing. The Chiefs of Staff, in a recent report on Staff conversations with France and Belgium, said that they considered that at a later stage it would be desirable if possible to engage in conversations with the Dutch, particularly with regard to the defence of the Netherlands East Indies. They accordingly suggested that if the international situation should in the near future cause us to enter into conversations with other and more important Powers than Holland, conversations with the Dutch should follow rather than precede the major discussions. This is still the position, and conversations with the Dutch would only take place at a later stage. Our conversations with the French are now beginning, but no decision has yet been taken about any approach to the Dutch.

3. In view of this—though for the present it is sent to you for your own information and cannot be used—it would be as well that nothing should be said in conversation with members of the Netherlands Legation or any other Dutchmen in official positions which might make them think that we should be unwilling to proceed to any form of Staff conversations or exchanges of information about defence matters. I happen to know that the Netherlands Minister here is strongly in favour of Staff exchanges with us, particularly in regard to the Far East, and that he has made his views known at The Hague, though without much hope of converting the Netherlands authorities to his view.

W. STRANG

No. 601

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 98 *Telegraphic* [C 4620/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 2, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following is an attempt to place before you what I believe to be the real views of the Roumanian Government, which they are reluctant to express bluntly lest they do anything which might in any infinitesimal degree lead His Majesty's Government to recede in the present attitude which they wish to regard as definite undertaking to defend any country which resists if directly or indirectly attacked by Germany.

1. We do not believe that Germany has the slightest intention to attack us.

¹ No. 604, but the reference appears to be to telegram No. 96 (No. 603).

2. We have no confidence that Poland, having weathered the present storm thanks to the Anglo-French attitude, will not start trimming and eventually reach an understanding with Germany which Germany would regard as relieving her of anxiety in the East if she attacked in the West.

3. We therefore fear that if we conclude a mutual assistance pact with Poland we may find Germany at war with Great Britain and France, Poland standing out in the first stages and Germany resentful of our readiness to join Anglo-French front, and therefore encouraging and supporting a Hungarian attack on us.

4. If Poland is at war with Germany we can render her no serious military help. Most probable result of our attempt to intervene would be that Germany would immediately organise a Hungarian attack on us. We are sure, now that you are determined to prevent German hegemony, you will support Poland even though Poland has contracted out of her liability to support France and you.

5. If Germany directs and fosters a Hungarian attack on us we shall be overrun in whole or in part whether or not Poland comes to our help but, being sure of your determination to prevent German hegemony, we shall fight. (N.B. The King said yesterday that he had not a doubt that the final outcome from a war was the defeat of Britain's enemies.)

6. We quite see that it is most strictly logical to seek to extract from Poland an undertaking to support you and us in the event of a German attack but to insist on that assurance would in effect stultify your determination to stop Germany's onward march.

7. If Germany attacks Poland, and you step in, there is a fair chance that Hungary will keep quiet, and she certainly will if there is any danger of being heavily attacked by Yugoslavia. Are there not indications that in spite of all Italy may decline to follow Germany?

8. Maintain your offer to help both us and Poland. We believe it to be in your interest as well as ours and the existence of that promise will sustain our determination to resist vassallage, but do not attach conditions which will render it impossible for us to maintain neutrality in the early stages of a war. We will undertake that Germany will on balance derive no benefit from it, especially if you will help us by buying our products.

9. To sum up, do not cast us for a part which we are not strong enough to maintain.

No. 602

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 2, 3.21 p.m.)

No. 94 Telegraphic [C 4608/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 2, 1939, 2.20 p.m.

The King received me yesterday. The opening reference to the Prime Minister's statement yesterday about Poland led His Majesty to ask why it had not also contained assurance of support to Roumania. I replied on lines

indicated in your telegram No. 79¹ and added that the British mood was very determined. We then agreed that Herr Hitler had performed two unbelievable miracles in changing the fixed outlook of the English and Americans on the continental problem.

The King manifested the same mistrust of Poland as the Minister for Foreign Affairs (see my telegram No. 91²). With regard to Russians he said that in case of need he would of course accept their help but having regard to public opinion here and in Poland he hoped that approaches to Soviet Government would be as discreet as possible. I interjected that account must be taken too of Yugoslav opinion. At the mention of Yugoslavia His Majesty seemed uneasy and asked what about the Yugoslavians. I said that I believed Italians are anxious to keep them neutral but I felt sure that they would fight if attacked.

Mention of Italians led His Majesty to advance favourite Roumanian theme that a few concessions, not of a territorial nature which would be a dangerous precedent, from France and perhaps the hope of a loan from Britain would quickly detach them from the Germans.

My impression throughout the audience was that while quite determined to stand by the public declarations of his Ministers, the King is anxious if possible to avoid any action which by any tortuous twist can be interpreted as provocative in Berlin.

Repeated to Warsaw, Berlin and Moscow.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

¹ No. 583.

² No. 587.

No. 603

*Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 3, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 96 Telegraphic [C 4619/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 2, 1939, 6.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 91.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs discussed Anglo-French proposals with the King after my audience and the following is Roumanian reply communicated orally last night.

Roumanian Government take note with interest and satisfaction of a proposal which aims at reinforcement of peace and security in Eastern Europe. This is Roumanian policy based on economic co-operation and absolute determination to defend by force frontiers and independence.

Roumanian Government observe with pleasure that His Majesty's Government has taken into consideration certain suggestions of Roumanian Government e.g. British offer while avoiding old formula of mutual assistance is made in the light of determination of Roumanian Government to defend

¹ No. 587.

themselves by force against attack direct or indirect (as defined in paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 65²).

Roumanian Government have already affirmed this determination and are ready to repeat declarations made at meeting of National Front by President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs (my telegram Saving No. 26³) and they would welcome their reinforcement by Franco-British declaration of assistance. In the view of Roumanian Government these declarations should be in conformity with peaceful policy of Roumania and be directed at no third party and be unprovocative.

Roumanian Government are prepared to keep His Majesty's Government informed as in the past of any developments which may cause them anxiety.

As regards extension of Polish-Roumanian alliance and possibility of securing closer co-operation of Greece and Turkey, Roumanian Government raise three points which require further study.

1. Are His Majesty's Government yet aware whether Polish Government wish to extend alliance to cover all contingencies? (this of course is primarily aimed at Hungary).

2. Would His Majesty's Government abandon proposed declaration if it proved impossible to extend scope of Polish-Roumanian alliance?

3. If a set of matters arose in which Polish Government found it necessary to free themselves from their obligations would Anglo-French declaration still hold good?

In order to assist in elucidating these points Roumanian Government will establish direct contact with Polish Government and also consult Greek and Turkish Governments.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow.⁴

² No. 538.

³ Not printed. The declaration made at this meeting was to the effect that Roumania would 'take nothing which did not belong to her', but would 'defend her frontiers and her independence by all the means at her disposal'.

⁴ This telegram was repeated to Paris by the Foreign Office.

No. 604

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 2, 8.15 p.m.)

No. 97 Telegraphic [R 2561/464/37]

BUCHAREST, April 2, 1939, 6.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 90.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to call yesterday morning in order to tell me that he was much troubled by the fact that invitation to Berlin

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of March 31, Sir R. Hoare reported that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had told him that the German Minister had conveyed an official invitation to him to visit Berlin. M. Gafencu had replied that the moment was perhaps not propitious since Roumanian relations with Hungary were not yet restored to normal, but that if the invitation were renewed next month he would hope to be able to accept.

(for 18th or 19th April) had been repeated. German Minister had been instructed to say that after his birthday Herr Hitler would not be in Berlin for some time. Minister for Foreign Affairs was almost disposed to resign in order to get out of this over pressing invitation. Conversation having been placed by him on personal basis I said that was quite out of the question.

He told me last night that after discussion with the King, he was accepting the invitation and would then go on in private capacity to Brussels, London, Paris and Milan.²

Repeated to Berlin.

² On April 10, Sir R. Hoare was instructed to inform M. Gafencu that the Foreign Office would 'be happy to see him in London'.

No. 605

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 2, 10.0 p.m.)

No. 102 Telegraphic [C 4594/54/18]

WARSAW, April 2, 1939, 7.50 p.m.

M. Beck left for London today by Nord Express. He told me that he has now consulted the President, the Marshal and other members of the Government and can therefore discuss the British proposals with their authority.

2. While it may seem unnecessary for me to make any observations in connexion with any conversations which you may have with M. Beck I would venture to draw attention to certain points on which there should be a frank discussion.

3. I have endeavoured without success to secure a straightforward statement from Minister for Foreign Affairs as to what has passed between Germany and Poland during the past few weeks regarding Danzig. It would appear from your telegram No. 74¹ that the Polish Ambassador in London has been equally evasive. Whether they were direct demands or feelers Germany appears to have recently expressed her *desiderata* to Poland as follows: (1) Revision of the Statute of Danzig probably by annexation to the Reich, (2) An 'autobahn' with extra-territorial rights across the Corridor, and (3) A clarification of Poland's attitude to the Soviet Union.

4. It would appear that at present Poland would only agree to a revision of the Statute on the basis that Danzig should continue to be a Free City while Poland would make certain concessions regarding the present limitation on its sovereignty. Certain members of Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasize that it is essential for Poland that the Danzig zone should not be re-militarised; she might conceivably agree to an 'autobahn' across the Corridor but without extra-territorial rights though reducing to a minimum any customs and other frontier formalities.

5. As regards Russia Poland is of course unwilling to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

¹ No. 598.

6. In view of the obligations which we have for the time being assumed as regards Poland and of our position as *rapporteur* for Danzig question it seems to me that M. Beck should be urged to tell you frankly what has hitherto passed between Poland and Germany and what concessions Poland is prepared to make. The chief difficulty is that the Polish Government has hitherto failed to educate public opinion on the lines that any concessions are necessary.

7. As regards the project outlined in your telegram No. 56² the main point on which Poland will probably make difficulties is the obligation to assist Roumania if attacked by Hungary. While M. Beck may cherish few illusions as to the reliability of Hungary's friendship he nevertheless seems still to hope that it may be possible to prevent Hungary definitely committing herself to the German camp.

Repeated to Berlin, Bucharest and Moscow.

* No. 538.

No. 606

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 3, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 223 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4693/15/18]

BERLIN, April 3, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I am informed from a reliable source that the three quotations from the Wilhelmshaven speech given in my immediately following telegram² and printed in this evening's 'Angriff' fully represent Herr Hitler's frame of mind. Informant who is in contact with the War Ministry has stated that the first sign of German intentions, which will be kept secret until the last moment, will be a lightning attack on British fleet with the object of delivery of a knock out blow. There will be neither an ultimatum nor a declaration of war. War Office officials declare that Herr Hitler alone will decide the time for action and personally issue the vital order without consulting the competent military advisers.

I realise that the above is very sensational and I have no evidence that such action will take place in the near future. But I feel that as we are dealing with a maniac who is violently roused against Great Britain you should be aware of this contingency.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes reported comments by Dr. Silex in the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' on Herr Hitler's speech at Wilhelmshaven.

² Not printed. The three quotations printed in the 'Angriff' were as follows: (i) 'The German people are not willing to contemplate growing dangers with inaction.' (ii) 'He who declares himself ready to pull chestnuts out of the fire for the Great Powers must expect to burn his fingers.' (iii) 'If, indeed, anyone wishes forcibly to measure his strength with ours, the German people are ready for this and also prepared and determined.'

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 643 [C 3573/19/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 3, 1939

Sir,

I transmit to you herewith a copy of a Note from the German Ambassador, dated the 17th March, regarding the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the taking over by the Reich of the foreign affairs of the Protectorate. No reply has yet been returned to this Note.

2. Herr von Dirksen called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on the same day before the receipt of the Note to inform him, under instructions from his Government, that the German Embassy had taken over the duties of the Czecho-Slovak Legation, and that persons of Czecho-Slovak nationality at present in the United Kingdom would be under the care of the German Embassy. His Excellency mentioned that he would be sending a formal written intimation to this effect.

3. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that this matter raised rather a difficult point. He thought that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would not be able to recognise the legality of the change of status of Czecho-Slovakia, but this question could no doubt be dealt with formally when the promised written communication had been received.

4. The Ambassador remarked that, on the point of legality, it would have been noticed that the Czecho-Slovak President had publicly stated that everything had been done with his agreement. Sir Alexander replied that such agreements were extracted in rather peculiar circumstances, and that, in his opinion, His Majesty's Government would be unable to attach much weight to the President's utterance.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN No. 607

Dr. von Dirksen to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20)

(Translation)

GERMAN EMBASSY, London, March 17, 1939.

My Lord,

In fulfilment of instructions from the German Government, I have the honour to notify to Your Excellency the following decree relating to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, dated the 16th March, 1939:—

(Text follows. Translation is in Prague despatch No. 126 of the 17th March).¹

In conformity with article 6 of this decree, the Reich is taking over the

¹ Not printed. See No. 591, note 4.

foreign affairs of the Protectorate, and especially the protection of its nationals abroad. The former diplomatic representatives of Czecho-Slovakia abroad are no longer competent to transact official business.

At the same time I have the honour to state, on behalf of my Government, that the foregoing notification is being made to the South African Government direct.

I have, &c.,
VON DIRKSEN

No. 608

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13)

No. 107 [C 5121/3356/18]

MOSCOW, April 3, 1939

My Lord,

In amplification of my despatch No. 106¹ of the 31st March I have the honour to report that the visit to Moscow of Mr. Hudson and his Mission gave frequent occasion for an informal interchange of views on the general international situation. More formal conversations were limited to two in number.

2. The first, on March 23, was in fact on M. Litvinov's initiative as he took opportunity of Mr. Hudson's first courtesy call in my company to express his views at considerable length. These were on the lines used by him in previous conversations with myself and could be divided into (1) a recital of the past errors of the 'capitulating' Western Democracies and of the efforts of the Soviet Government to guide Europe in the right path, and (2) a recommendation of a Conference of Powers, great and small, to remedy the evils and dangers of the present situation.

3. M. Litvinov's historical review was most comprehensive, and began as far back as the adhesion of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations. Developed with his usual mastery of the subject, it exhibited the constant retreat of the Western Democracies from one position after another, culminating in the Munich capitulation and the cold-shouldering of the Soviet Union.

4. Mr. Hudson interposed with regard to Munich the only argument which can appeal to an unsentimental realist like M. Litvinov, namely, that such responsible Englishmen as were inclined to cavil at the decision of His Majesty's Government were the first, on being shown the facts of the military and international situation then existing, to realise that we had in fact no option at the time. He preferred to concentrate on the present and the future.

5. M. Litvinov was quite clear on those points. Touching but lightly as he generally does in conversation with me on British weakness (in contradistinction to his habit when conversing with a French representative), he

¹ No. 593.

said that France was practically done for: she was, as he put it, full of German agents, disaffected and disunited, at the mercy of certain leading politicians whom he profoundly distrusted. He foresaw in the not far-distant future a Europe entirely German from the Bay of Biscay to the Soviet frontier and bounded, as it were, simply by Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Even that would not satisfy German ambitions but the attack, he said smiling happily, would not be directed to the East.

6. Mr. Hudson countered with a description, most valuable, as coming from one in the know, of the change of heart which had occurred both in the Government and people of Great Britain, and also of the remarkable progress of our rearmament which had completely reversed the previous situation. Having, as I think, considerably impressed his hearer, he mentioned Your Lordship's anxiety that Powers interested in the preservation of peace should maintain close contact and should act in concert so far as possible.

7. This led to a discussion as to which particular Powers should be included in any such concert or contact, M. Litvinov maintaining the necessity of including the largest possible number, both small and great, while Mr. Hudson argued that it was for the big Powers, especially Great Britain and the Soviet Union, to give a lead which the others would probably follow. Both agreed that in any case the fullest measure of resistance, whether diplomatic or military or economic, should come into review at any such conference.

8. Comparing impressions after this conversation I found that Mr. Hudson regarded M. Litvinov as having made some new suggestion beyond his usual recommendation of a Conference which Your Lordship had decided was premature.

9. A further conversation between M. Litvinov, Mr. Hudson and myself was therefore arranged, at which I asked His Excellency to define more particularly what he had in mind. It then became clear that M. Litvinov had only been envisaging a conference with the South-Eastern and Baltic and Scandinavian countries to follow the Four-Power declaration, which was then the subject of negotiation, as a later development of his suggestion which I had forwarded to Your Lordship by my telegram No. 42² of March 22. In view of the fact that the negotiations for the Four-Power declaration seemed in a parlous condition, that His Majesty's Government might be placed in a difficulty by a renewed suggestion for a Conference and that Your Lordship had been informed of the first conversation by Mr. Hudson's message transmitted in my telegram No. 43³ of March 23, I thought it best not to encourage further discussion.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

² No. 490.

³ No. 505.

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 10)

No. 412 [C 4894/11/18]

BERLIN, April 3, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 223¹ of February 17, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith copy of a further memorandum by the Air Attaché containing his views on the strength and efficiency of the German Air Force as a consequence of the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia in the Reich.

2. It seems evident from this memorandum that the German Government will now dispose of additional aircraft construction factories and skilled personnel, both of which will, after proper re-organisation, be of considerable value to the German Air Force. The great difficulty, however, with which Germany will be faced, appears to be the provision of sufficient trained personnel to meet the requirements of an expanding Air Force.

I have, &c.,
GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

¹ No. 117.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 609

BERLIN, March 28, 1939

Chargé d'Affaires.

The following are my first impressions of the effect on the strength and efficiency of the German Air Force produced by the German assumption of a protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia, but it may be necessary to modify them when more detailed information becomes obtainable from what used to be Czecho-Slovakia.

2. In a memorandum dated 15th February,¹ 1939, in which I gave the Ambassador my views about the present condition of the German Air Force, I stated that most of the new German aircraft factories had almost reached the stage of full production and that I did not therefore anticipate any marked increase in the output of German aircraft in the near future unless special measures were put into effect. Such special measures might include the working of two or even three shifts in factories instead of one as at present, but, in view of the shortage of labour, and particularly skilled labour, in Germany, it would not be possible to increase the number of shifts unless labour were taken from other factories not employed on aircraft work. It is reported on fairly good authority that this was done in certain instances last September but it must be regarded as a war measure and cannot be done without causing considerable interference in the country's industry.

3. The assumption of the protectorate has obviously placed at Germany's disposal important aeronautical resources for the aircraft industry of Czecho-

¹ Enclosure in No. 117.

Slovakia was well organised and efficient, and, what is perhaps more important, employed a large number of highly-skilled personnel. A complete list of the engine and aircraft factories with their estimated output is not yet available and would not anyhow be very informative as most of them were producing small types of civil aircraft, but those resources will now be at Germany's disposal both for export purposes and for her military and civil aviation. It is not expected that the factories will be allowed to continue to produce aircraft of Czech design but they will probably be embodied in the organisation of German aircraft production. This must take some little time while the tools and jigs required for the new types are being obtained and installed but the acquisition of the former Czech aircraft industry should in due course increase Germany's output by about 100 aircraft of military type per month.

4. The limiting factor in the rate of expansion of the German Air Force up to the present has not, however, been the difficulty of providing sufficient aircraft and engines but that of providing sufficient trained personnel and particularly officers with sufficient experience to fill important posts. It seems unlikely that the acquisition of Czecho-Slovakia will help the German Air Force in that respect but on the contrary, it may for a time quite possibly add to the difficulties.

5. Czecho-Slovakia had quite an efficient and well-equipped air force of 52 squadrons (500 to 600 first-line aircraft). The German Air Force has intimated its willingness to accept volunteers from the former Czech Air Force and since the latter included a certain number of persons of German or Austrian origin there is sure to be some response. But it was notorious that advancement in Czecho-Slovakia's armed forces was the perquisite of those of Czech origin and it is unlikely that the latter will offer their services in any great number in the near future. Thus it seems probable that most of the responsible positions in the German Air Force organisation in what used to be Czecho-Slovakia will have to be filled by officers of the German Air Force. The position regarding the other ranks may be less difficult for most of them were conscripts and so drawn from all the mixed races who went to comprise the State of Czecho-Slovakia, but in the immediate future it is doubtful whether German crews would feel altogether comfortable in the knowledge that their aircraft were being maintained by Czech personnel. It is probable that the German Air Force will obtain some increase to its strength from the personnel of the new Protectorates but the increase is unlikely to be of any great importance in the immediate future and it is possible that this asset of an increase in strength may be counterbalanced by the added difficulties.

6. When Austria was annexed last year it remained a separate command under General Löhr, an officer of the old Austrian Air Force, but most of his staff were drawn from the German Air Force. General Löhr was last week appointed to command the newly-formed Luftlotte IV which is to comprise what used to be Austria, Moravia, Bohemia, the former Sudeten areas, and part of Silesia; it is to consist of two administrative districts, Luftgaue XVII (the former Austria) and XVIII (the remainder) and will later probably

include two Fliegerdivisionen (operational commands). Most of the officers for the staffs of these commands will almost certainly have to be provided by the German Air Force which is already having great difficulty in finding officers with sufficient experience to fill a great number of posts. The difficulties involved in absorbing the former Austrian Air Force have not yet been overcome. It was considered necessary to change all equipment and training arrangements completely and delay in carrying out these arrangements has been involved by the necessity to enlarge almost all the aerodromes and to reconstruct most of the accommodation in order to bring them up to the German standards. It is almost certain that similar difficulties will have to be faced in the newly-acquired territory.

7. It is clear that by the acquisition of the former Czech resources Germany has obtained an important potential addition to her own air strength, the most important being the aircraft industry with its complement of skilled workmen, but it is probable that all the former Czech factories will be re-equipped so as to construct aircraft and engines of German design and so this addition to Germany's air strength will have little effect during the current year. In some of the English papers it was assumed that the 52 squadrons of the former Czech Air Force can now be added to Germany's air strength, but that is obviously very far from being correct. It is not possible at present to estimate what response there will be to Germany's appeal for volunteers from the former Czech Air Force but it is quite certain that it will be nothing like 100 per cent. Information from Czech sources leads me to think that the response in the immediate future will be rather poor but perhaps in a year or so there will be a marked improvement as the bitterness engendered by the loss of independence is somewhat reduced by the need of the young Czechs to find employment. Even if it is found possible and considered desirable to retain certain of the former Czech units as part of the German Air Force, which seems unlikely, it is fairly certain that they will be re-equipped and will be of little military value much before the end of the year. It is not expected that more than a very few officers for the staffs of the new Luftgau and Fliegerdivisionen will be obtainable from the former Czech Air Force and they will have to be found from the German Air Force which is already experiencing difficulty in that respect. Thus, apart from the disappearance of a fairly powerful potential air enemy in Czecho-Slovakia, Germany has for the present obtained little acquisition to her air strength by the disruption of that State, and may even find it something of a liability. During 1940 the output of German military aircraft from the existing Czech factories should reach 100 to 150 per month and there may be a fairly large intake of officers and men from the new Protectorate into the German Air Force.

J. L. VACHELL
Group Captain, Air Attaché

APPENDIX I

Additional Letters on the German Situation, February–March 1939

In addition to the letters printed above the Foreign Office archives contain copies of the following nine letters dealing with the German situation in the period covered by this volume.

- i. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, February 15, 1939.
- ii. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, February 18, 1939.
- iii. Mr. Chamberlain to Sir N. Henderson, February 19, 1939.
- iv. Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson, February 20, 1939.
- v. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, February 22, 1939.
- vi. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, February 23, 1939.
- vii. Sir N. Henderson to Mr. Chamberlain, February 23, 1939.
- viii. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, March 15, 1939.
- ix. Sir E. Phipps to Viscount Halifax, March 17, 1939.

(i)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 15, 1939*

My dear Secretary of State,

Ribbentrop is assisting Hitler to launch the new 'Bismarck' so I have not seen him yet and I shall make a point of trying to see him before I see anyone else. If he is not immediately available I shall, however, not wait long. Anyway I have my Anglo-German Society dinner tonight.

Goering has, I hear, lost an enormous number of kilos and is feeling the strain. He is not otherwise, I fancy, in decline but has wisely preferred to take a back seat in foreign policy and give Ribbentrop his head. Whether the rope will be long enough to hang the latter remains to be seen. He (Rib.) is undoubtedly filled with bitter resentment against England as is only natural in view of the failure of his mission to London and the constant abuse of him in most English circles. But I doubt whether, in his own interests, he is yet irrevocably hostile. The greatest feather in his cap would be an Anglo-German understanding and I believe that he may yet work for that and the popularity it would bring him, if taken the right way. Because, as I say, it is in his own interests and his master may yet desire it. My instinctive feeling is that both at the moment are 50–50. We should therefore for the moment do nothing to tip the balance in the wrong direction.

Goebbels' 'disgrace' was, I hear, entirely due, not to immorality but to his Jew campaign. He organised it and gloried in it, but Hitler and Germany in general disapproved of the result of it. But I doubt if he will be down for long and after I have seen Goering, I shall probably try to see him.

Very confidential. My Italian colleague who proved his loyalty in Munich days assures me that Mussolini does not mean to press the Italian territorial demands while keeping them in the picture, as just in principle even if unrealisable today in

practice. In his view Mussolini would be satisfied with the *Statut personnel* for Tunis which Italy enjoyed before 1914, with participation on the Suez Canal Board and with an equitable concession as regards the Jibuti Railway.

Even though I did not say so to Attolico, I cannot help personally thinking that France will be foolish if she does not eventually concede these points which are far from unreasonable. Naturally she cannot do so today, under pressure, but it would not be difficult to let Mussolini know that if all agitation is dropped, these concessions would be made as soon as Spain is liquidated.

That is one reason why I feel it is so unfortunate to hold up Franco's recognition. If it were only on humanitarian grounds, (the shortening of the war) I should have thought that recognition was urgent and I think the French are again incurring a sad responsibility in encouraging Negrin and company in a hopeless struggle. One can never look for altruism from the French.

All the above is between brackets as it is only indirectly a concern of mine. I asked Attolico if the German military activities in south Germany were meant as backing for Mussolini's demands. Attolico replied that though it would be in Italian interests to represent them as such it was not the case. Mussolini, as well as the Italian people, wanted peace and he repeated that the former had no intention of pushing the territorial claims or of committing himself in that direction too far. (I believe this to be correct today but if the French refuse to do anything the position would change.)

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(ii)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 18, 1939*

Dear Secretary of State,

When I went to see Weizsäcker yesterday, the first thing he said to me was 'Your reputation in Germany has risen still more since Munich'. I said that I was glad to hear it and better in Germany than nowhere; but why?

Well, he said, as you know there were two currents in Germany last year, pro- and anti-war. The pro-war based their policy on their belief that in no circumstances would Britain fight. They are now saying that, though they still are convinced that Britain never would have gone to war, you succeeded in persuading Hitler and the rest of them that England would have fought. According to them 'that damned British Ambassador bluffed us from start to finish: first by his special train on May 21st and then by convincing everybody at Nuremberg and afterwards that England would have made war on us. Blast the bloody British Ambassador!'

I laughed, but I repeat the story because I am well aware that a section of opinion at home chose to believe at the time, and particularly while I was at Nuremberg, that I had completely failed to impress upon the Germans the gravity of the position and the seriousness of Britain's determination.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

Later on in the conversation Weizsäcker mentioned to me that he had a long talk a few days before with Hitler himself at a small party on the events of last

year. It is quite possible therefore that the above comes from Hitler himself. Incidentally Hitler told Weizsäcker (a fact which I already knew from other sources) that it was the attitude of the Press (& particularly British) on May 23rd which definitely put him on the side of the war party last year.

N. H.

(iii)

Mr. Chamberlain to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

10 DOWNING STREET, February 19, 1939

My dear Henderson,

I have been much struck by the terms of the speech delivered by the Duke of Coburg as reported in your telegram No. 63.¹ It seems to come closer to that response for which I have been asking than anything I have seen yet. Of course it would have been worth more still if Hitler had made it himself but, if he approved it, it is good and I shall make some sympathetic allusion in the same sense when I speak at Blackburn on Wednesday.

You may think it worth while to mention, in the proper quarter, that I have noticed it.

Things look as though Spain might clear up fairly soon. After that the next thing will be to get the bridge between Paris and Rome into working order. After that we might begin to talk about disarmament, preferably beginning with Mussolini, but bringing in the Germans pretty soon. If all went well we should have so improved the atmosphere that we might begin to think of colonial dis-

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of February 16, Sir N. Henderson reported that before making his speech at the Anglo-German dinner on February 15, he had submitted an advance copy to the Duke of Coburg 'whose own speech was then completely re-written under higher direction'. The speech included the following passages, to which Sir N. Henderson drew special attention:

'In his Reichstag speech of January 30 the Führer gave an indication of the lines which Anglo-German relations might follow. He said: "It would be important for the whole world if our two peoples could co-operate in full confidence with one another." These words of the Führer were all the more impressive because they were spoken at the end of a year which was full of international tension and crises; yet that year found solutions for problems which seemed almost insuperable. Special mention should be made of the fact that the course of great historical events brought about for the first time personal contact between the head of British policy and the leader of the German Reich. All of us who have at heart the existence of close friendly relations between Germany and England, hope therefrom for a further clarification of international relations, and are convinced that a new and fruitful element for co-operation between the two nations has been established.

'If two great nations like Germany and England really wish to have mutual understanding, that fact does not depend only on the wish, but first and foremost on the reciprocal understanding for the needs and vital rights of the other party. It is therefore most welcome that recently in the sphere of economic relations between our two countries considerable progress has been effected. It was only lately that an agreement was reached between Germany and England in a sphere though hotly contested and of such vital importance to both countries as the coal market [see No. 137, note 1]. Both sides having recognised that an increase in reciprocal trade is necessary, the heads of the German and English industry will shortly open negotiations. We shall of course follow these efforts with deepest interest.'

Sir N. Henderson added: 'I have little doubt in my own mind that above quoted passages received personal approval of Herr Hitler himself.'

cussions. But people have got so frightened and 'het up' about them that we should have to approach the subject with the greatest care.

Yours sincerely,
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

(iv)

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 20, 1939*

My dear Henderson,

The P.M. has been good enough to show me his letter to you of February 19th.¹ I agree with him in welcoming what was said by the Duke of Coburg and I hope that it may be more than friendly words.

I am afraid the business of getting the bridge built between Paris and Rome is likely to be more difficult than the P.M. appears to feel, and I confess that I think his last paragraph is generally rather optimistic.

I do not myself feel there is any hope of making any sense of colonial discussions, as I think I said to you before you left England, unless and until your German friends can really show more than smooth words as evidence of friendly hearts.

Yours ever,
HALIFAX

¹ Document (iii) in this Appendix.

(v)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 22, 1939*

Dear Secretary of State,

The following are some of the loose ends of my talk with Goering last weekend.

I mentioned that I understood that Ribbentrop had now gathered all the threads of foreign policy into his own hands. (There was some malice in the remark.) Goering was a little taken aback and said that there were certain countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, which remained very much his own special preserve. And in any case Ribbentrop's instructions from the Führer were to keep him (Goering) fully informed all the time!

The Field Marshal was very anxious to know all about the decoration which I had received from His Majesty. I spoke in glowing terms of it and referred to mantles, chains and banners etc. Goering clapped me on the shoulder and said 'Such orders are never given to foreigners are they?' I told him very, very seldom which made him look regretful. He has always in mind a visit to London one day and the decoration part might be decisive. It is a point to bear in mind, if ever the day came.

He expressed his intense relief over the peaceful upshot of last year's crisis and said that war in Germany was and would have been terribly unpopular, though of course, as we all know, every German would have marched, if ordered to do so. My big impression after my return here is that Hitler has lately become very alive to German popular feeling in this sense and is determined democratically to respect it. If there was a war party here in December and January, I am convinced that today its shares are rapidly falling and that Ribbentrop, if he did belong to it, no longer does. He is, after all, only the mirror of his master.

My instinctive feeling is that this year will be the decisive one, as to whether Hitler comes down on the side of peaceful development and closer co-operation with the West or decides in favour of further adventure eastward. If we handle him right, my belief is that he will become gradually more pacific. But if we treat him as a pariah or mad dog we shall turn him finally and irrevocably into one.

I would feel confident if it were not for the British Press or at any rate that section of it which is inspired either by an intelligentzia, which hates Hitler and the Nazis so much that it sees red whatever the facts are, or by alarmists by profession and Jews. If I were a Jew, I would move heaven and earth regardless of the consequences, to attack Germany when and wherever I could. Though I sympathise with this attitude, it is not a basis for policy for England.

One of Goering's arguments in the weakness of the Prime Minister's position in England was his inability to eliminate what he described as 'the opposition from within'. The Germans always feign to believe that England speaks with two voices. An instance of that was my speech at the Anglo-German dinner and the coincidence of the simultaneous publication of the news about our doubled armament expenses. They see, just like we do in certain matters *mutatis mutandis* and with doubtless far greater justification, eels under every rock where Great Britain is concerned. In both cases fear is the inspiration and as always fear is the worst of all counsellors.

I go to Cologne on the 4th of March for the opening of a new branch of the Anglo-German Society in that city. Dirksen is coming out for it. I hope I shall avoid having to speak.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(vi)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 23, 1939*

My dear Secretary of State,

Many thanks for yr. letter of the 19th. I enclose my reply to the P.M.¹ & I hope you will concur in it.

The Rome-Paris business is not my job, but I feel fairly convinced that Musso. would be satisfied with little more than is quite legitimate & with what the French in their hearts would regard as quite legitimate, only they just don't dare going on saying 'Yes' to Dictators. Isn't it the same with Spain? I'm not anti-French any more than I'm pro-German (even though you do call these people 'my German friends'). I would fight personally for France tomorrow if she were wilfully aggressed. But most of our ills during the past twenty years must be ascribed to an excessive deference to French policy & there are occasions when I would say to them quite clearly 'You can do as you like but I am going to do this or that'. I admit that not being a politician in London, it is easier for me to say that than a Cabinet which is thinking of the next election!

Yet if France havers too long about recognizing Franco & seeks to impose conditions (other than purely humanitarian) for such recognition, we may shortly see Hitler encouraging Mussolini instead of, as now, exercising—according to the French Ambassador—a moderating influence.

I agree with you entirely in wishing to keep the colonial question at a long arm's

¹ Document (vii) in this Appendix.

length at present & I have so far seen no tendency from on high to bring it nearer. But what it would be really useful for me to know with greater precision is what you mean exactly by the necessity for 'my German friends to show more than smooth words as evidence of friendly hearts'. That sounds very well & I agree also in principle, but I ask myself what I can suggest to them as concrete evidence. All I can personally think of is a reduction in their tempo of armaments. There are some indications that they are beginning this in a small way. But it would be very helpful to me if you w'd let me know exactly what I can suggest to them. If you could let me know before March 1st when we diplomats dine with the Chancellor, it might be especially helpful. But it should be something on big lines, not just pinpricky affairs. The Press is alright just now but as long as the 'News Chronicle' &c. continue its attacks on one side, we can never hope for complete immunity on the other.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(vii)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Chamberlain

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *February 23, 1939*

My dear Prime Minister,

Many thanks for your letter of the 19th. Before getting it, I had just read the extracts in the German papers this morning of your Blackburn speech and of course noticed your allusion to the Duke of Coburg's speech. The fact that the German papers selected it as an extract means that they also remarked it.

Hitler entertains the Diplomats to dinner on March 1st. Provided I get a suitable opportunity—which I shall try to make but cannot guarantee—I propose to refer to this matter and say that we took the Duke's references as inspired by Hitler himself. Personally, as I wrote to Lord Halifax, I have little doubt of it. And if Hitler admits it, I shall draw his attention to your reference at Blackburn. I shall of course let it be known in the meantime in other quarters.

If Hitler is at all forthcoming and gives me the impression that he would welcome it I am thinking of suggesting to him that I have a talk with him in private. I would say that it would be quite unofficial and merely friendly.

My own impression on returning here is that they want to do what they can to improve the atmosphere. I feel that our own position today is such a strong one (which of course is why they want to be friendly) that we can well reciprocate. I should keep away from the Colonial question. I think Hitler (I judge by his gramophone record Ribbentrop) fully realises that that question must wait a long time yet and that economics and disarmament must come first and create that greater confidence which can alone give Hitler the hope of a satisfactory colonial solution.

Talking from the angle of Berlin, I know that it would greatly help if we could lose no time in recognising Franco and getting that question out of the light. If that were out of the way, it would strengthen Germany's hands in putting water into the Italian wine vis-à-vis France. The French Ambassador assures me that they are doing that already. Personally I believe a French-Italian solution should not be difficult, if it were not that the French are afraid of doing anything which the French people would regard as another concession to dictatorial threats. Just as here our great difficulty is German susceptibility, deriving from an inferiority

complex; so at Paris it is French amour propre. Unfortunately these impalpable considerations constitute a greater obstacle to realistic policy than the difficulties to be overcome themselves.

All this is by the way and merely because you mention these problems yourself in your letter. My own inclination is to go ahead bilaterally with the Germans with only one immediate object in view, namely the improvement of the atmosphere and the engendering thereby of greater mutual confidence. The immediate effect of this will be to make Hitler still more unwilling to support Mussolini too far. Everything is possible but I personally do not believe that Germany would give armed assistance to Italy when she realises, as she does, that the answer to that would be British armed assistance to France. The main danger that I see today in the situation is lest the war party (and there is always one somewhere) encourage Hitler to believe that the lucubrations of the British opposition Press etc. really mean that Britain intends, when fully ready and the moment opportune, to attack Germany. Your recent speech in the House of Commons should be very helpful in this respect.

Yours sincerely,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(viii)

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, March 15, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

Do you wonder that I regard Berlin as a soul-scarifying job.

Hitler has gone straight off the deep end again. It has all come very unexpectedly—even for the Germans and Goering, who has been recalled undoubtedly to his great disgust, would never have been allowed to go away, had any such precipitate move been contemplated. But Hitler is a master of turning events to his own advantage and the Czech military coup at Pressburg gave him the opportunity. And the extremists have again won the day & all one can hope is that they will eventually regret it.

What distresses me more than anything else is the handle which it will give to the critics of Munich. Not that I did not always realise that the complete subservience of the Czechs to Germany was inevitable. I did and that is one reason why all the talk about Holland, Switzerland & the Ukraine irritated me. It turned people's minds from the real objective & was, I believe, largely put about by the extreme Nazis themselves for that very purpose. But I did not foresee the lightning turn which events would take—nor, in justice to myself, did anyone. And I wonder today what Mussolini thinks of it all. The only good point in his view probably is that it will give the Poles & Hungarians a common frontier.

I was very disagreeably surprised last night when I heard that President Hacha was on his way to Berlin. Why he came himself I cannot imagine. But I daresay it was for the best in the end, as Hitler had made up his mind to go to extremes & that the President himself signed the declaration in a sense lets us out of a position which was hopeless.

I presume you will consider with the French Govt. the question of withdrawing Ambassadors. I spoke of this with my French colleague this morning. He was opposed to the idea on the ground that it might be playing Italy's game. I don't know what to think. The abandonment of the Stanley-Hudson visit (which I take

for granted) gives us an opportunity of an immediate mark of displeasure & possibly the best thing is to wait & see how things develop. The ramp was undoubtedly Vienna's to start with & having been successful Hitler has used it for his own ends.

A few days ago I told one of my staff that I was uncertain whether Newton or I would lose our jobs, or both of us. I anticipate the Germans will want the former in any case. If they do, then the latter may also follow in consequence thereof. We cannot make war on Germany but we can reduce relations to a minimum: & at heart I am in favour of that.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

The objection is that once the Ambassador has gone, it is difficult to send him back again.

N. H.

Apologies for this scrawl but it has been written in a great hurry.

(ix)

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, March 17, 1939

My dear Secretary of State,

I have had the following from a source that has hitherto proved completely reliable.

This news comes from a quarter in close touch with Goering and is confirmed by a person in close touch with the Vatican.

Hitler's personal wish, backed by Goering, Himmler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels and Reichenau, is to make war on Great Britain before June or July. The Army is, however, still doubtful about Hitler, and, if warned, they would not wish to fight Great Britain and France. But this warning must be clear and certain. The only way to convince the Army that we mean business is the withdrawal of the two Ambassadors from Berlin accompanied by a very firm declaration saying why they have been withdrawn.

There is little time to be lost, but the Army does not see eye to eye with Hitler. Having been wrong hitherto, however, on the advice they have given Hitler they must be convinced by something tangible and striking. My informant considers that the withdrawal of the Ambassadors would be considered a dreadful thing in Germany, and would open many eyes. He feels that France does not realise this situation and told me in the very strictest confidence that he meant to give the same warning to M. Daladier, M. Bonnet or M. Reynaud.

I must beg for the very strictest secrecy for all this. If it got out people in Germany would lose their lives.

My informant urged most earnestly that no credence whatever should be placed on anything that Germans might say to Henderson.

Finally I would add that my informant was always a warm admirer of the Prime Minister's Munich policy. He told me just before Munich that war would be averted. He made me promise not to reveal his identity.

Please forgive deficiencies in typing, which I have done myself.

Yours very sincerely,

ERIC PHIPPS

APPENDIX II

Report by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin on his visit to Germany and interviews with German statesmen, February 19 to February 26, 1939

[C 3938/8/18]

I left London on Friday, the 17th February, having received the following instructions from the Secretary of State:—

‘To renew personal contact with officials of the Foreign Office, Ministry of Economics, Reichsbank, &c., and to exchange views with them on the economic situation in Germany and in the world; if invited to do so, to interview Ministers of the German Government and exchange views with them in a similar way, while making it clear, if necessary, that he has no concrete proposals to make; to find out, if possible, what roads are still open to economic recovery and reconstruction and might, therefore, be worth pursuing, and what roads are closed.

‘And generally to convey the impression, as far as Germany’s own economic difficulties are concerned, that we are waiting to see what measures the German Government propose to take in order to cure them, and that we, for our part, are not contemplating concessions or offers of assistance to Germany at this stage.’

I travelled via Paris, and while there had an opportunity for a talk with M. Rueff, Directeur du Mouvement des Fonds in the Ministry of Finance.

I arrived in Berlin on the evening of Sunday, the 19th February, and stayed at the Hotel Adlon. In the course of the week I had (among others) the following interviews and entertainment:—

February 19—

Dinner: Mr. A. Holman.

February 20—

Morning: His Majesty’s Ambassador. Dr. Wiehl, Chief of Economic Section, Auswärtiges Amt.

Evening: Herr von Ribbentrop.

February 21—

Luncheon: Dr. Wiehl: to meet various Government and Reichsbank officials connected with my visit.

Afternoon: Tea with Herr Rechenberg (of Press Department, Ministry of Economics), and Herr Schneyder (Berlin representative of ‘Essener National-Zeitung’—Field-Marshal Göring’s paper).

February 22—

Luncheon: Dr. Puhl, at the Reichsbank, to meet the Reichsbank Direktorium.

February 23—

Luncheon: Dr. Carl Goetz, president of the Dresdner Bank, to meet various Berlin bankers.

Afternoon: Dr. Funk.

Dinner: Mr. G. H. S. Pinsent.

February 24—

Morning: General Field-Marshal Göring.

Dinner: Mr. W. Rootes.

February 25—

Morning: Dr. Wohltat (Field-Marshal Göring's principal economic adviser).

Dr. Wiehl (to say good-bye) and Dr. Bielfeld.

Afternoon: Herr Treue and Herr Wienke, of the Reichsbank.

Dinner: Mr. Jordan (Berlin representative of the Federation of British Industries).

February 26—

Morning: His Majesty's Ambassador.

Luncheon: Mr. G. H. S. Pinsent.

I left Berlin on the evening of Sunday, the 26th February, returning via Paris, where I stayed at His Majesty's Embassy. During my stay, I again saw M. Rueff; also M. le Comte de la Baume, chief of the Economic Department of the French Foreign Office.

I returned to London on Tuesday, the 28th February.

I submit herewith:—

- (1) A general report on my visit to Berlin.
- (2) A more detailed record of conversations with Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Funk and General Field-Marshal Göring.
- (3) Observations by the Financial Adviser to His Majesty's Ambassador, Berlin, on the records of conversations with Dr. Funk and General Field-Marshal Göring.

(1)

General Report

Germany is in an 'Engpass'—a narrow defile, difficult to get through. Most Germans with whom I spoke believe that these difficulties will be surmounted; they do not think that their country is heading for the 'economic collapse', which has been long prophesied. An 'economic collapse' is almost impossible in a country so well regimented as Germany.

A steady decline of the standard of living seems, however, to be inevitable. There is no general scarcity of food; but there are periodic scarcities of individual items, so that in varying districts certain kinds of food—eggs or butter or fruit, or something else—become for a time unobtainable. The enormous labour demands of industry are drawing people away from agriculture. There is some grumbling and apparently a growing slackness and lack of response (to long work hours and Nazi propaganda) on the part of the workers. Communists in Berlin send their women to make queues in front of shops by way of protest. I was told that whereas the communal arrangements in up-to-date factories (kitchens, baths, &c.) are admirable, the private dwellings of the workers (in this case, better-class mechanics) are narrow and comfortless.

Economic conditions inside Germany are not brilliant, but they are certainly not disastrous.

Difficulties have arisen from many causes connected with an artificial and ill-

balanced system of production and trade. Labour is fully employed; there is even considerable labour shortage and employment of foreigners. Long hours are worked. But a great deal of employment must be unproductive. There are an enormous number of party officials and quasi-officials living as parasites on the country. Labour is suddenly withdrawn (as for the mobilisation last year) or displaced (as when 300,000 men were moved from other jobs to finish the Siegfried Line). Immense stocks of manufactures and semi-manufactures are accumulated by one part of the productive machine to be only incompletely absorbed by another. There is, therefore, a great deal of waste—of time and labour and material; and probably this more than anything is adding to the rising costs of production in the country.

It is also adding to the difficulties of the export trade. This trade has been suffering from the demands of the home market, from the general trade recession last year, from the excessive canalisation and irregular operation of the 'clearings', and from the boycott which was intensified after the anti-Jewish measures of last November.

For the first time, I think, Herr Hitler, in his speech of the 30th January, referred not as heretofore to the economic successes of Nazi Germany, but to the present serious situation in which Germany must export—or die.

This, therefore, is the foreign trade aspect of the 'Engpass'—the need for export, above all for foreign exchange, wherewith to acquire the raw materials required for the vast industrial machine, to which the industries of Austria and Sudetenland have been recently added.

There is also an internal financial aspect of the 'Engpass', to which the dismissal of Dr. Schacht has recently called attention. Dr. Schacht's 'miracle' consisted in anticipating the certain profits resulting from stimulation of production which had been at a very low ebb by calling those profits into operation through short-term bills for financing the development which was going to create them. Eventually, he knew that this short-term indebtedness could be paid off by taxation or consolidated by loans. The solidifying phase was within sight at the beginning of 1938; although no budget was published, there was a feeling in Germany and abroad that it was getting into balance.

The events of 1938 pushed back this financial recovery. Especially the building of the Siegfried Line, the cost of mobilisation, expenditure for Austria and Sudetenland, capital expenditure on the Four-Year Plan (possibly productive), the rebuilding of the German cities (indirectly productive) and rearmament (not productive at all) were increasing the burden on the Exchequer. The state of the railways is demanding urgent attention and capital outlay.

Dr. Schacht could produce no further 'magic'. His programme was a balanced budget, increase of taxation, reduction of expenditure, financing of armament by long-term loans. Hitler has rejected this programme in the form presented by Dr. Schacht; but, as I was told in the Reichsbank, 'facts are stronger than men', and there are indications that there is curtailment of expenditure already and a rigorous search for economies.

Dr. Funk, Schacht's successor, told me that I could assure the authorities in England that there would be no 'inflation'. He proposes, however, to finance rearmament by short-term bills ('Schatzanweisungen'), trusting to be able to supply sufficient consumers' goods, e.g., the 'Volkswagen', to ensure a rapid turnover of currency and so avoid the evils of inflation. The policy is known as 'Konsumlenkung' (direction of consumption).

This may or may not be possible; but it seems evident that in one direction or another Government expenditure must be curtailed, both from the point of view of foreign trade—export needs and raw material requirements—and from that of the internal financial situation—need for economy.

This turning away from the purely political objectives of last year to what is at least serious consideration of economic possibilities and limitations may be of great importance. In the first place, it implies, though it does not necessitate, some limitation of the armaments race; secondly, it means that Germany must look towards the United Kingdom for assistance or co-operation in the economic sphere.

The friendliness with which I was received and the importance which the Germans attached to my coming were signs of Germany's present intention in this respect. The German Foreign Office, indeed, appeared to think that I would have a plan or proposals ready made; but neither Dr. Funk nor Field-Marshal Göring were expecting this. On the other hand, I got a definite impression of proposals coming from the German side. These proposals took one or other of the following forms:—

- (1) Further conversion of the foreign debt (Dr. Funk, Field-Marshal Göring and Dr. Wohltat) so as to minimise the demand for 'Devisen' for debt payment purposes and to prepare the way for a removal of the exchange controls, 'that accursed system' (according to Dr. Funk).
- (2) Agreements between industries (as, in fact, are at present being pursued)¹ to obviate uneconomic competition in third markets.
- (3) Arrangements for immediate obtaining of raw materials, e.g., copper from Northern Rhodesia and cotton from India, in return for supply over a certain term of machinery, constructional goods, &c., for the Empire countries in question (Dr. Wiehl of the Foreign Office).
- (4) Modification of certain colonial tariffs, as promised in Mr. Eden's Geneva offer.
- (5) Modification of certain United Kingdom tariff duties specially prejudicial to German exports.
- (6) Anglo-German financial and industrial co-operation, i.e., United Kingdom to produce the capital and to get some share of the orders for large-scale development works in South-Eastern Europe, South America, Spain, &c. (Field-Marshal Göring, Herr von Wilmowski of Krupps).

These six points are sufficient to indicate the directions in which Germany is looking for 'help' from us. They should, I think, be carefully investigated, on the hypothetical basis (except No. 2, which is actually a live issue) that Germany's policy really is one of peace and co-operation.

As I have said above, there is a strong presumption that, if 'facts are stronger than men', then Germany's policy in the immediate future must be one of peace—for economic reasons.

On the other hand, Herr von Ribbentrop gave me to understand that there was some further task for Germany to do in Central Europe—'where England must not mix herself in'—and also some further stage to reach in her Four-Year Plan policy before the moment for Anglo-German conversations or co-operation had been reached. But even he said, in reply to a question, that there was no idea of 'shutting out' England; and Field-Marshal Göring said spontaneously that

¹ See No. 137, note 1.

Germany's commercial policy in South-Eastern Europe was not one of monopoly and exclusion.

Field-Marshal Göring insisted that Anglo-German economic co-operation should begin at once, and that this would lead on to political agreements. However, his principal economic adviser, Dr. Wohltat (just back from Roumania), definitely emphasised that political confidence must precede economic co-operation. Dr. Wohltat thought that some kind of pact between the United Kingdom and Germany (and others perhaps) guaranteeing peace in Europe would be a necessary prelude to economic co-operation on any wide scale.

There was no emphasis in any quarter on the question of colonial restoration; when colonies were mentioned at all, it was *en passant*. But I think the ordinary German assumes that sooner or later the colonies or some colonies will be restored. There is a department of the Foreign Office (African Department) which is engaged, among other things, in preparation for the return; it is in charge of Dr. Bielfeld, whom I saw; he was for some years at the Embassy here and is an old friend of mine.

There can be no doubt therefore of Germany's increasing preoccupation with economic questions at the present time; nor, I think, of a certain turning towards England in the hope of benefits and advantages. It is less easy to discern any will and intention on the German side to contribute actively towards peace in Europe and in the world in a way which would justify sacrifices on our part and a lively hope in a better future.

But facts may be stronger than men; and Germany may be compelled by her circumstances to moderate her policy and reduce her expenditure on armaments. We should not ignore the possibilities of a more peaceful development; and we should not put Hitler in a position to say that once again he made an offer of co-operation to England and that that offer was pushed aside.

This was also the view of M. de la Baume, head of the Economic Department of the French Foreign Office, with whom I had a short conversation in Paris on my way home. His remarks have already been reported from Paris by telegram No. 107, Saving,¹ of the 27th February. He said that his Government had felt that Hitler's appeal in his speech of the 30th January for economic collaboration should not be left without an answer, and the French Ambassador at Berlin had been strongly supporting this view.

The French Government had therefore decided to make an approach to the German Government suggesting action on two lines: first, an exchange of French agricultural products against German machinery, and second, an arrangement for an exchange of French colonial products against German exports. M. de la Baume did not go into the details of the latter, but from what he said the arrangement contemplated would be a somewhat complicated one. He added that he expected that the negotiations would begin either in Berlin or in Paris in about eight days.

In any measures we may consider taking, we should bear in mind the importance of keeping in touch with the French Government, who clearly think there is something to be said at the present time in favour of an economic approach to the problem of European peace.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

March 5, 1939

² Not printed.

*Records of Conversations with Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Funk and
General Field-Marshal Göring.*

(a) *Conversations with Herr von Ribbentrop and Dr. Wiehl.*

I saw Herr von Ribbentrop at 5.30 p.m. on Monday, the 20th February; Herr Hewel was with him.

The interview began slowly; enquiries about Mr. Stanley's visit, the industries' talks, Anglo-German trade, &c.

Then, when I suggested that the future prospects for trade depended most of all on political factors, viz., peaceful conditions, reduction of armaments, removal of exchange controls, and other hindrances, His Excellency suddenly warmed up and gave me an almost continuous lecture of about half an hour's duration.

Germany must be economically independent, he said, hence the Four-Year Plan; every effort, all his efforts to bring the United Kingdom nearer to Germany on broad economic lines had failed—perhaps the United Kingdom was not sufficiently organised, perhaps individual interests intervened; anyhow, nothing came of it. The creditor spirit was too petty. Look how it had intervened to secure payment on the Austrian loans, political loans made to strengthen Austria against Germany.

He had tried to get Mr. Baldwin to see the Führer, but some influence or other had stopped it. He had been thinking then of large-scale credits, but nothing had come of it and the conditions had now changed. The Führer had decided in favour of the Four-Year Plan. This would make Germany relatively independent. She could supply her own needs first from her own resources; and then she would export and build up, if she required it, a gold reserve (though she got on quite well without gold). She would import, yes, but especially she would export such things as her admirable machinery and motor cars. Then she would be in a position to reach wide agreements with England and other countries about future trade. Anyhow, she wants no loans or credits.

Meanwhile, it was too early for any broad negotiations. The Four-Year Plan was not yet complete and the atmosphere had been poisoned by propaganda. Germany had reached firm settlements with Great Britain—the Naval Agreement, the Munich declaration; also with France; and had now made an agreement guaranteeing Belgium. These countries were not threatened in any way. But there were other countries which lie in Germany's sphere of influence.

I asked whether this sphere were political or economic.

Herr von Ribbentrop replied, perhaps both. We do not mix in England's affairs; we expect England not to mix in our own sphere.

He believed that Mr. Chamberlain was working for peace. But there were others in England who were opposed to Germany. The late Secretary of State (Mr. Eden) had always seen everything from the House of Commons angle; he used to say this and that will be attacked by the Opposition, &c. There were many enemies of Germany—an international gang. Their leaders had now fled from Holland, &c., to the United States, where they were making a ruthless propaganda against Germany, and President Roosevelt was lending himself to this. At Lima he had actually tried to persuade the South American States that they were about to be attacked by Germany. Could anything be more senseless? But he knew America; momentary excitements and enthusiasms soon died away and were forgotten. The German press itself never attacks other countries; but when Germany is attacked

it answers in kind. Herr von Ribbentrop specially mentioned the 'News Chronicle' as a notorious mischief-maker.

When the propaganda and excitement had died down, and Germany's Four-Year Plan was somewhat further advanced, then there could be a broad settlement. The colonial question, trade questions, the satisfaction of reasonable claims of Italy on France, the armaments question—all these would fall into their place; but not immediately. I observed that the whole development which Herr von Ribbentrop had so eloquently portrayed would take rather a long time; meanwhile, the two countries were wasting their substance on armaments. He replied, perhaps it would not take so long.

Meanwhile, he said, Germany had done a great work, for which all countries ought to be grateful—the breaking of the Comintern conspiracy. Spain had been saved; France had been saved, for France would assuredly have gone if Spain had gone (he spoke appreciatively of Daladier and Bonnet); perhaps England had been saved.

I suggested that the activities of the Comintern were hardly very formidable at present; he thought this was still a great danger.

Although declamatory, Herr von Ribbentrop's manner was very friendly throughout; and he gave up quite a lot of his time to me. His purpose, I think, was to emphasise that, since Great Britain had no concrete proposals to make for economic help, Germany had no need of any. She is quite strong enough to stand on her own increasing resources.

A German friend of mine had seen Herr von Ribbentrop earlier in the day, and had evidently been told that England is '*perfide*', and Germany is growing to such strength that she will be able to state her own terms, economic as well as political, and insist on getting them.

This same friend told me that the Führer has much more sensible views than von Ribbentrop. He may not understand much about economics, but he has a very quick common-sense understanding of a situation.

Practically everything that von Ribbentrop said to me was of very doubtful validity. But it would not have been worth while contradicting him. Either he was unconscious of mis-statement; or he knew that the picture he was giving of Germany's power and injured innocence was a false one. I am afraid that his own eloquence has convinced him that he is right.

He was wearing a grey-green uniform; so was Herr Hewel. Seated, he was quite impressive; but when he rose he seemed to shrink into it, and looked like a rather worried and misjudged schoolmaster in the uniform of his own school corps. Herr Hewel, good-looking and red-cheeked, was clearly the senior prefect.

I had spoken during the morning to Herr Wiehl, who is head of the Economic Department of the Foreign Office—mostly about the arrangements for the industrial negotiations. He thought these were the most practical steps that could be taken at the present time. In the circumstances, the existing machinery of Germany's foreign trade was not so bad—the German-French Agreement, the Anglo-German Agreement—but the volume of trade was not sufficient fully to employ the machinery. Exports to England, for instance, had fallen off badly through the boycott; and by the working of the Payments Agreement imports from England had also consequently fallen. He agreed that peaceful conditions in themselves would serve to expand trade within the framework of the bilateral agreements. He thought that peaceful conditions would continue, but he, too, hinted at some adjustment that must be expected in a part of Europe whete

England was not concerned. I told him that we realised that Germany was the natural market for products of South-Eastern Europe, but we did not think this should mean the exclusion of British trade; and he appeared to agree. He talked for a time about 'Grossraumwirtschaft', saying that we had given the lead with the Ottawa policy. He asked what I had in mind as the economic solution. I said that, in my opinion, the immediate task was to do what could be done in present circumstances on the line indicated in the industrial negotiations; the next was to limit armament expenditure, which was both scaring trade away and pressing upon the standard of living (and therefore the purchasing power) of the people in both countries; and, finally, to aim at some extension of our tripartite currency understanding with France and the United States, so as to enable Germany to take her place among the countries with free and relatively stable currencies. Herr Wiehl appeared to agree; at any rate, he said there must be currency stability before Germany could possibly remove her controls.

I saw Herr Hewel next day and again expressed appreciation of his chief's courteous and very interesting reception of me. He said that he hoped Herr von Ribbentrop had removed from me at any rate the impression (so widely held) that he was anti-British. This was far from being the case; no one could be more anxious for a settlement with Great Britain.

I also asked the German friend mentioned above for his explanation of this recurrent hint of some adjustment in a part of Europe where England had no business to intervene. He was sure (from his recent talk with Hitler) that this referred to Czecho-Slovakia, and to nowhere else—not to Hungary or Roumania. It indicates a further extension of German influence over the Czech State. The Czechs would retain their nationality, passports, &c., but a German Resident in Prague would direct policy.

(b) Conversation with Dr. Funk.

I saw Dr. Funk at 6 p.m. on Thursday, the 23rd February, in the Ministry of Economics, and was talking with him for about 1½ hours.

He is one of the few people here who has not worried me to know if I have a 'plan'.

He has a plan of his own. He had discussed it in general terms with Dr. Puhl, but this was the first time he had revealed it. The plan referred to an International Banking Consortium, which, possibly through the B.I.S., should buy up the whole present foreign debt of Germany in the open market; and should then arrange with the German Government for conversion into a new loan—with interest, transfer and amortisation guaranteed—but at a much lower rate of interest. 'The present rate of interest and the market price of German bonds are a national shame', said Dr. Funk. He believed that this operation could be made attractive to the bondholders (by improving the market value of their holdings) and profitable to the bankers; it was necessary to Germany for her prestige and to lighten the burden of interest payments in the payments' balance. For such an arrangement the agreement of the United States would be necessary and Great Britain must help to get this!

It was an essential condition for dealing with the German currency question and the exchange controls. Dr. Funk was determined to get rid of these 'horrible things'. He had told the Führer so. Germany must have a free exchange policy, and a 'valuta' which stands on equal footing with pound and dollar. The Führer was in full agreement.

But if the exchange were now free, the increased inflow of goods from abroad *plus* the burden of the interest payments would make it impossible to maintain the exchange parity. The debts must, therefore, first be dealt with and the interest payments reduced.

He was also going to deal with the Standstill debt; only money advanced on strictly commercial transactions involving exchanges of goods should rank in the Standstill debt. He did not say what was to happen to the rest.

Having reduced the debt, it would then, he thought, be possible to fix a parity of exchange for the mark, aligning it with sterling—but there would have to be an external mark and an internal mark for a long time yet. For readjustment of the internal mark would mean a readjustment of prices and wages, which this Government could not contemplate.

(It seems to me that if German internal prices are still to be kept isolated from the rest of the world, a large amount of the exchange control machinery will have to be retained.)

Dr. Funk said that he had also to consider the danger of capital flights, but he thought that this would be disposed of by the liquidation of the Jewish question, which would probably take some two or three years.

I said that the knowledge that he was determined to get rid of the exchange control system was most comforting. I thought, however, that for the kind of operation which he had in view a very large degree of confidence was necessary:—

- (1) Political confidence that there will be no more war and rumour of war.

But, said Dr. Funk, the Führer said so in his speech; yes, I answered, and it cannot be said too often at present.

- (2) Commercial confidence, that merchants and investors will not somehow lose their money.

It was lack of any such confidence, I said, which kept the German bonds at such a low quotation.

If these two kinds of confidence can be restored, I said, then I was sure—and our Ministers had said—there were many ways in which English and German interests could co-operate. But could I be certain that the Führer really wished to co-operate with 'those damned English'? Dr. Funk protested that he (the Führer) certainly did.

I spoke to Dr. Funk about armament expenditure and said that it was an excessive burden in both countries. Dr. Funk agreed; but said that owing to the conditions of a free economy, rearmament would cost more in England than in Germany. His difference with Dr. Schacht had been that Dr. Schacht had insisted that rearmament must be paid for by loans ('Anleihen'), whereas Dr. Funk was prepared to find the money by way of the short-term market ('Schatzanweisungen'). He said he was interested to see from the papers that the announcement of our new armaments programme was followed at once by a new issue of Treasury bills; so he assumed we were in fact adopting the same method as he. I said that he was surely mistaken. The sale of our Treasury bills serves the day to day requirements of the Government whether for armament or anything else and in due course they are reduced generally through the issue of a long-term loan.

'You can assure your Minister,' he said, 'that there will be no inflation.' He said that in a totalitarian State it was so easy to control prices and wages.

I told him that I thought it might be possible if he could see that sufficient consumers' goods were available to keep the currency in circulation; that is to say,

there must be more consumers' goods and less production goods and armaments. He said this was so; the supply of consumers' goods must be sufficient to bring the currency continuously back to the bank; the promotion of the 'Volkswagen' was intended to serve this purpose. The argument then came back to the wastefulness and danger of armament expenditure; and Dr. Funk appeared to agree.

The choice before the world, he said, is between an economy based on gold and an economy based on barter. He thought the former a more profitable basis; but there were countries which had gold and countries which had none. To make the gold economy work, the countries with gold must supply it to the countries without, or allow them somehow to acquire it. The danger at present was that the United States would drain away all the gold stocks of the world. Other countries would thereby be driven on to a barter economy; and meanwhile the United States itself would collapse in a vast inflation based on her enormous gold stock.

(c) *Conversation with General Field-Marshal Göring.*

I saw Field-Marshal Göring at 12.30 p.m. on Friday, the 24th February, in the reception rooms of his 'villa' behind the Prussian State Office. Dr. Schmidt, Herr Neumann (Statistician of the Four-Year Plan) and Herr Gritzbach (private secretary) were also present. We four sat in a line in enormous chairs in front of a high writing desk on a dais behind which sat the Field-Marshal at some distance. It was not an easy position for a friendly chat.

The Field-Marshal was in the grey uniform of the air force.

He began by a formal expression of thanks for the efforts of the Runciman Mission last autumn, giving us generous praise both for our hard work and our good intentions.

I thanked him, and said that there was one purpose which we had most firmly kept in mind: this was that nothing so far as we were concerned should be done to embitter relations between England and Germany, but rather to lead on towards friendship and co-operation.

He then proceeded to talk in very general terms about the advantage of economic co-operation between the two countries, for which he considered that a wide field was open. Out of an economic understanding political confidence would grow. I suggested that political peace was the basis for economic confidence. He would not have this: it was saddling the horse from the wrong end. I then asked him under what headings was he thinking of economic understanding. He said:—

- (1) Freer supply of raw materials.
- (2) Agreements regarding manufactured articles, e.g., elimination of competition.
- (3) Restoration of currency and removal of exchange controls.
- (4) Debt cancellation or at least revision.

As regards (1), I said that we, too, in England had to pay for our raw materials, whether from the Empire or elsewhere; I could only suggest that, if Germany were to enter our currency system, she would then be in much the same position as we were for obtaining raw materials.

As regards (2), I hoped the forthcoming negotiations would be a step in the direction of regulating competition.

As regards (3), we had always desired to see other countries remove their controls, and, if Germany were able to do so, I thought the others would quickly fall into line.

As regards (4), the Field-Marshal worked himself up into considerable heat at

the thought of the way in which Germany had been stripped of everything after the war and had then been supplied with money on loan—all of which he seemed to think was morally due to her as a gift in reparation. I said that the moral side of the question could provide so much discussion from either aspect that it was really rather useless, and that we should rather pursue this matter on a strictly practical basis. He agreed with this very promptly; and did not contradict my suggestion that people who have lent money and lost it hesitate to lend again.

There were therefore two kinds of confidence, I said, which had to be created—commercial confidence and political confidence. The foundation of political confidence I suggested was to be found in the conviction of both peoples that there would be no more war between them.

Of course, there would be no more war between England and Germany, said the Field-Marshal: he was convinced of that. The last war was a ghastly mistake. It must never happen again. It would never happen so long as he was in power. He believed that the English people and the German people were utterly opposed to war between the two countries. But it is Governments, not peoples, who decide. And the English people were so 'anständig' (decent) that they would follow their Government into a war of which they disapproved. I said that in England, too, Governments have to listen to their people before they can take them into war.

Nevertheless, said the Field-Marshal, Germany would never have solved the Austrian and the Sudeten questions in her own way if it had not been for her strength. If it had not been for this strength, England would not have consented to anything more than 'Autonomie' for Sudetenland. I said that I was not sure that would not have been on its merits the better solution; for the Sudetenlanders if they had been dissatisfied with their 'Autonomie' could always have used it to get independence later on.

Anyhow, he said, there would be no war. Not in the East either?—I asked. The Field-Marshal replied: 'I have never seen any memorandum, plan, or proposal about this so-called Ukraine business. It simply does not exist in our intentions.' Later, however, he said that Germany with her vast population must have a hinterland from which to draw supplies: and again, he said, there is at least one country which might conceivably attack us. That is Russia. I said that I thought Germany had defeated Russia decisively in Czecho-Slovakia last year—a bloodless Austerlitz. This idea pleased him, and he agreed that there was something in it.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the idea of armament limitation as a pre-existent condition to economic co-operation does not appeal to the Field-Marshal; but if it is a question of insistence in speeches, the press, &c., of the necessity for Anglo-German peace, I think he would agree. He said he had assured the Führer that 'of course, we can work with England'. I wonder why he had to assure him.

He referred to the press as being the great mischief-maker, and especially the press in the United States at the present time. I said that our press was an example of moderation. He evidently did not agree; and referred to the 'News Chronicle'.

He said, 'You cannot rely on the Americans. They are too uncertain. When you destroyed the German economy during and after the war, you destroyed the central pillar of the world economic system. The whole building came crashing down. You can only build it up again with Germany.'

He seemed quite sincere in his belief that it could be built up again by the two countries acting together. 'We have no intention of making a monopoly of trade—not even in the Balkans. We shall always be their principal market. But we have no idea of being exclusive. There is room for British trade as well there.'

I think he was pleased at my visit. I said that I had looked forward to it for a long time and had hoped it would have been more of a private visit, and less of an official or semi-official affair. He said that that had been his intention too: and that next time it must be quite a private talk.¹

Neither the Field-Marshal nor Dr. Funk asked me whether I had brought any plan with me; they appeared quite content to talk on their own basis. Only Herr von Ribbentrop and the Foreign Office people asked me about plans.

Neither the Field-Marshal nor Dr. Funk referred directly to colonial claims. Von Ribbentrop spoke of the satisfaction of Italy's reasonable claims against France; the Field-Marshal mentioned the cruel treatment of the Italians by the French in Tunis—but in rather a perfunctory way. The Field-Marshal said that the Spanish question ought soon to be settled.

The Field-Marshal is very much slimmer than when I saw him in Munich. His relative Mr. Brassert said to me that he has been overslimming; that what may be good for his figure is bad for his heart. He is leaving for San Remo next week, and will be away for about three weeks. He told me he would take no documents with him and would have a complete rest.

¹ The suggestion that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin should 'have a talk' with Field-Marshal Göring, unofficially and *à titre personnel*, was first made to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin in October, 1938, by Prince Max von Hohenlohe on the ground that Field-Marshal Göring was 'impressed by the difficulties of autarky and feeling his way towards a freer policy'.

(3)

Observations by the Financial Adviser to His Majesty's Ambassador, Berlin, on Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's Conversations with Dr. Funk and Field-Marshal Göring.

The principal subjects dealt with in these conversations were the following. I classify them, *very roughly*, according as they present the main interest for the United Kingdom or for Germany:—

United Kingdom interest—

- (1) Arms limitation.

Mutual interest—

- (2) Removal of exchange control in Germany.
- (3) Trade discussions.
- (4) Co-operation in development of other countries.

German interest—

- (5) Freer supply of raw material.
- (6) Debt revision.

To take these in order:—

(1) Funk agreed that armament was an excessive burden on both countries, but said no more. Göring apparently is not interested in armament limitation as a prior condition to economic co-operation. In fact, there is no indication from these two conversations that the German Government would be prepared to take up this subject at all.

(2) Both Funk and Göring spoke of the desirability of removing the German exchange control. But when Funk went a little further it became apparent that what he had in mind did not amount to a removal of the exchange control at all.

He would still keep an internal and an external mark, which would not be exchangeable, and I infer that he would still keep import control and export subsidies. He would not, in fact, be prepared to do any of the things which we hope to secure by a removal or relaxation of exchange control.

In actual fact, whatever Funk and Göring say, I believe that exchange control is such a fundamental condition of the whole German economic régime that there is no prospect of its removal until that régime entirely changes its colour. It is the daily burden of the German press that Germany has got to protect herself against the influence of outside depressions and booms, and that she has done this by exchange control, import control, and control of internal investment, distribution of raw materials, prices and wages. To give up these controls would merely mean that Germany would have to return to a state which she professes to regard as involving economic dependence on other countries. No doubt there is a lot of nonsense in this theory, and the German business world would far prefer a return to something approximating to the previous state of affairs. But I believe it would require a political reaction before this could occur, and, in fact, the political tendency is all in the other direction—whatever Funk and Göring may say.

(3) As regards the trade discussions, these had already been initiated in our negotiations last year, and it is to be hoped that some arrangements may be found which will benefit both sides. At the same time arrangements for the elimination of competition are apt to work at the expense of third countries and have to be pursued with appropriate caution.

(4) Co-operation in the development of other countries is an old German idea. The Germans have to some extent outbid us by giving long-term credits for the construction of capital works in other countries, but the disadvantage for them is that by doing so they postpone the date at which they receive the foreign exchange for their exports. What they would like would be to finance such contracts with British credit, which would enable them to receive the foreign exchange proceeds immediately from British lenders, the latter being recouped in due course from the country whither the German goods are exported. Such business has no particular attraction for us. In the old days, when international movements of capital were free, arrangements of this kind could be useful and profitable; but at present, when international capital movements are restricted, every country has to ensure that its foreign lendings are used for the promotion of its own exports. No doubt there might be cases in which some arrangement of the kind, involving both German and British exports, might be of mutual advantage, if it were clear that the British credit provided would not serve indirectly to strengthen Germany's armaments. But this matter would have to be judged on concrete cases, and I am not aware that any scheme of the kind has come in recent years within the scope of practical discussions.

(5) It is not quite clear what the Germans mean when they speak of the 'freer supply of raw materials'. It might mean either more commercial credit or more exports. But they have ruined their own credit, or at least placed it in a strait jacket, by their own policy of exchange control. They have also severely limited their own capacity to export by their armament programme. Their desire for more imports of raw material is, in fact, created by this armament programme, and not by the intention of raising the German standard of living.

(6) As regards debt revision, British creditors have already agreed to arrangements by which they forgo nearly half their interest, and the interest rates at present being transferred are remarkably reasonable. Moreover, Germany's

foreign debt has been reduced by devaluations to the extent of 6 milliard reichsmarks (the present total is given at 10 milliard reichsmarks). The Transfer Agreement of the 1st July, 1938, was, so far as concerns the Dawes and Young loans and certain other loans, expressly described as a permanent settlement. Germany's inability to transfer the full interest to her foreign creditors (which has been practically recognised by the above arrangements) is due in the main to her determination to rearm. There is *prima facie* no reason why foreign creditors should make any further concessions.

Funk's plan is not clear, but Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin thought he meant that Germany's foreign debt should be brought up at the present market rate (say a third of its nominal value) by means of a new issue bearing perhaps 3 or 3½ per cent. interest. How on earth does Funk imagine that such a new loan can be issued at par (except perhaps with the guarantees of other Governments) when the premier German securities, viz., the first series of 4 per cent. funding bonds with transfer guarantee which have now only six years to run, stand at 37? Alternatively, how does Funk imagine that the creditors would willingly accept a conversion which would reduce even their present limited receipts to a third or a quarter of the present amount? If the present quotations of German bonds abroad are a 'national shame', what is wanted to remove this shame is that Germany should change her policy in international affairs and cease to throw out further proposals for reducing the interest transfers on her foreign debt. No doubt this is what Rüter called the other day 'our horrible capitalistic attitude'. But Germany cannot have it both ways—she cannot invite the co-operation of British capital and German exports unless she is prepared to respect the rights of investors. She has, on the contrary, always put her armament first and foreign investors last, so that instead of the debt settlements being reached through a mutual comprehension of each other's unavoidable difficulties, they have tended each time to take the form of a dog fight.

Altogether these conversations hold out, in my opinion, little hope of progress in economic co-operation. The things which we want—particularly arms limitation and, to some extent, freeing of the exchange—are not in reality practical politics. But the German mouth is wide open for concessions on debts, trade, &c., which would in reality merely serve to strengthen their rearmament position. There may perhaps somewhere be scope for an understanding; but we have listened *ad nauseam* to what the Germans want, and it is perhaps time that we told them again in plain terms what *we* want.

G. H. S. PINSENT

February 27, 1939

APPENDIX III

Letter from H.M. Embassy in Moscow on Soviet policy in connexion with the possibilities of negotiating a war trade agreement in the event of war between Germany and the Western Powers

BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, *February 20, 1939*

[68/6/39]

Dear Co-ordination Section,¹

The following, for what they are worth, are our observations on the interesting memorandum enclosed in your letter² of the 12th January regarding the possibility, in the event of a war with Germany, of inducing the Soviet Government to withhold from Germany certain commodities and services, while granting them, where necessary, to the Allies. They are intended to supplement, and not to correct, your memorandum, with which we are in general agreement. You will see that we have paid a good deal of attention to the political aspect of the question which, in our opinion, is likely to prove of first-rate importance, for, as your memorandum points out, the whole foreign trade of the Soviet Union is so small, as compared with the volume of internal production and consumption, that in determining a line of action even as regards trade policy, more general considerations would be likely to outweigh purely economic and financial considerations.

2. In considering any question of this kind, it is in the first place most important to realise that Soviet policy is essentially one of opportunism and realism and is not likely to be influenced to any appreciable extent by ideological or moral considerations, but only by the immediate interests of the Soviet State and its present rulers. It would thus be a grave mistake to suppose that sympathy for the 'so-called democracies', or dislike of the 'fascist aggressor bloc' would necessarily influence the Soviet attitude in the event of a conflict between the two blocs. It must be remembered that, with the accession to power of National Socialism in Germany, the Russia of Stalin made a determined bid for the friendship of Herr Hitler's régime, and also that, until the formation of the Anti-Comintern bloc, relations between fascist Italy and the Soviet Union were excellent, while the Soviet Union has never supplied Italy with more oil than during the Abyssinian conflict and at the outset of the war in Spain. In the event of a European war, there is every reason to suppose that the attitude of the Soviet Government would, as the memorandum under discussion assumes, be one of nervous neutrality and that the

¹ The Co-ordination Section of the Foreign Office dealt with the preparation in peace time of measures to be applied in the event of the outbreak of war.

² Not printed. This letter, and the memorandum enclosed, dealt with the possibilities of concluding a war trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. for the purpose of denying supplies to Germany in the event of the outbreak of war. An analysis of German 'deficiency commodities' and alternative sources of supply suggested that the commodities which the Soviet Union might be in a position to supply and which Germany would be most likely to need in war would be cereals, oilcake, timber, flax, manganese ore, asbestos, apatite, liquid fuels and butter.

principal aim of Soviet policy would be to prevent the Soviet Union from itself becoming involved, an eventuality which, in the present state of the country, the Soviet Government could not but view with alarm. It is perhaps worth mentioning that such an attitude has been justified in advance by the Soviet press which consistently refers to the impending struggle as the 'Second Imperialist War' with which the mighty Soviet Union, safe behind its own frontiers, need not be concerned.

3. In the circumstances, while the Soviet Government would naturally be anxious to avoid unnecessarily upsetting Soviet foreign trade, it seems likely that one of their chief cares would be to avoid any course of action, economic or other, likely to antagonise Germany. The risk involved in antagonising the Allies would, for obvious reasons, be considerably less. As regards economic pressure, we could of course cut off the Soviet supply of nickel from Canada, but, even so, it would probably be possible to obtain it as a re-export from a third country. It thus seems quite possible that, rather than become involved in dangerous disputes with Germany over the question of contraband control, the Soviet Union might take the easier course of cutting down Soviet trade with the Allies, a course which would be yet further facilitated were compensating opportunities for trade to be offered elsewhere, as, in fact, they certainly would be by Germany. The possibility of receiving from Germany in exchange for their raw materials German machinery, which has always had a great reputation in this country, would be sufficient compensation for the dislocation of Soviet trade elsewhere, though it is presumably uncertain how much machinery Germany would be in a position to export in time of war. In the face of these various considerations it seems unlikely that the purely economic levers at the disposal of the Allies would be sufficiently strong to act as a deterrent. It must be remembered that the amorphous economic and financial system of the Soviet Union is, by its very nature, able to endure, without being thrown out of gear, shocks which would completely dislocate the more highly-developed and delicate systems of capitalist States. On the other hand, the Germans, if refused the raw materials required by them, might endeavour to seize them by force, and would at any rate do everything in their power to prevent them from reaching their enemies.

4. Although at the outset of a European conflict it seems likely that the Soviet Union would confine itself to a comparatively passive role, it would be liable to depart from this initial attitude in the light of subsequent developments. From a Soviet point of view perhaps the most satisfactory outcome of such a conflict would be the military, financial and political collapse of both sides. Such an eventuality would furnish the Soviet Union with an unrivalled opportunity to fish in troubled waters and to extend its influence by the methods so dear to it. Another solution eminently satisfactory from a Soviet point of view would be the collapse of Germany. Besides relieving this country of what is undoubtedly regarded here as a serious menace, it would lead to Soviet preponderance in Eastern Europe and would moreover provide an opportunity of resuming with a weakened and consequently more amenable Germany the natural and mutually profitable collaboration which existed before 1933. From the Western Powers, even though victorious, the Soviet Union would clearly have nothing to fear. It is possible that, in order to achieve one or other of these, from the Soviet point of view, highly desirable results, the Soviet Government might, at a later stage of the conflict, be prepared to depart from an initial policy of non-intervention and afford economic, or even military, support to one side or the other, provided that this could be done without

undue risk, and subject always to subsequent changes of attitude, according to the further development of the situation.

5. There remains a further possibility, which, from a Soviet point of view, would be the most unsatisfactory outcome of all, namely a rapid victory for the Germany of Hitler over France and Great Britain, leaving the victors ready to turn eastwards with their strength unimpaired. It is possible that in the hope of preventing such an outcome the Soviet Government would be prepared to grant a certain measure of economic support to the Western democracies. It is, on the other hand, at least equally possible that fear of a quick German victory would have the opposite effect and would cause the Soviet Government to refrain from any action calculated to irritate Germany and to seek the first opportunity of coming to terms at any price with the victor.

6. So much for the considerations of political expediency likely to influence the attitude of a neutral Soviet Government in the event of a war. It remains to examine the present productive power of the Soviet Union as regards the commodities enumerated in the memorandum in question, with a view to determining whether this country is capable, whatever its policy and inclinations, of influencing a European conflict to any appreciable extent by means of economic support afforded to one or other side. Although the Soviet Government would, if, for reasons of political or economic expediency, they considered it necessary, undoubtedly be prepared to deprive their own population of the necessities of life in order to be able to export, the total amount of any commodity available must needs prove a limiting factor in this respect. Furthermore, at a time of international upheaval the need for building up reserves could clearly not be left out of consideration.

7. With regard to foodstuffs and fodder, the Soviet ability to export necessarily varies from year to year, according to the crop. In 1937, for example, the grain crop was good enough to make it possible for a certain amount of grain to be exported. After last year's bad harvest, on the other hand, it seems probable that this year there will scarcely be enough to feed the ever-increasing population and certainly none left over for export. The same applies to other crops. As regards butter and sugar there is no reason to suppose that this country is in a position to export them in large quantities. Thus, although in an exceptional year appreciable quantities of foodstuffs might conceivably be available for export, such a state of affairs should on no account be regarded as the rule.

8. With regard to flax, there has of late been a considerable falling off in its production and there is reason to believe that export has now ceased altogether.

9. Of the two metals specified, high grade pig iron would not appear to be available for export at the present time. (It appears that the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade informed the Polish Trade Delegation at present in Moscow that the production of pig iron with a 60% iron content is not sufficient for it to be possible to export it, although there is apparently an export surplus of lower grade pig iron.) Manganese ore on the other hand would seem to be plentiful and will be one of the principal exports to Poland under the Trade Agreement which is shortly to be signed. Germany is also believed to be contemplating at the present time an agreement with the Soviet Union under which she will receive large quantities of manganese.

10. As to timber and timber products the Board of Trade are certainly in a much better position than this Embassy to estimate the productive capacity of the Soviet Union in this respect. It is, however, perhaps worth recalling that complete

disregard for the elementary rules of forestry, and, in particular, ruthless felling of trees during the past twenty-five years have led to a serious state of affairs and it is, to an increasing extent, being found necessary to bring timber from remote parts of the country comparatively difficult of access. On the other hand both Germany and Italy are known to be anxious to obtain timber from this country and, in the event of the timber at present exported to Great Britain being diverted, very considerable quantities would be available for export to them.

11. With regard to petroleum products, the position is that, while the Soviet Union at the present time at any rate, owing to inability to refine, produces comparatively little high grade (aviation) petrol, and is obliged to import considerable quantities from abroad, large quantities of unrefined petroleum are available for export. Indeed Soviet exports of petroleum to Italy under the new agreement are estimated in some quarters at half a million tons a year. Both Italy and Germany would presumably be in a position to refine this petroleum themselves, if necessary.

12. With reference to the table of Soviet exports and imports appended to the memorandum, it is perhaps worth pointing out that imports to the Soviet Union from Germany for the first nine months of 1938 were only about a quarter of those for the same period of 1937, when they amounted to 15% of total Soviet imports. During the same period exports from the Soviet Union to Germany declined in value from 84 million roubles to 67 million roubles. Germany's place as a source of supply has to a great extent been taken by the United States of America and in case of a war the Allies would no doubt aim at maintaining this state of affairs, but, whatever the falling off in German-Soviet trade, Germany is bound to remain a potential customer and supplier of the Soviet Union.

13. In addition to the commodities enumerated in the memorandum, cotton is perhaps worth mentioning as a commodity which the Soviet Union is in a position to export and which in time of war would presumably be of importance in connexion with the manufacture of high explosives.

14. From the foregoing it will be apparent that it would be a mistake to regard the Soviet Union, as is so often done, as an unending source of raw materials. In effect, the amount of good or harm which the Soviet Union would be able to do in this way would be strictly limited, manganese and unrefined petroleum alone of the exports in question being available for export in dangerous quantities.

15. Finally, as regards the possibility of preventing the Soviet Government from putting their merchant ships at the disposal of Germany and of inducing them to use them for trade with Great Britain, it seems to us that the consideration likely to carry most weight would be the danger involved. The Soviet Government would certainly be reluctant to use their ships for trade with the Allies, if they were likely thereby to lose their ships and imperil their neutrality.

16. To sum up, it seems safe to say that, in the circumstances contemplated, the Soviet Government would be guided entirely by considerations of political and, to a lesser extent, economic expediency; that the means of pressure, whether political or economic, at the disposal of His Majesty's Government would be most inadequate, but that fortunately the limited export surplus of the Soviet Union would mean that, in the event of a war, Soviet trade policy would scarcely be a matter of vital importance.

Yours ever,
MOSCOW CHANCERY

APPENDIX IV

Foreign Office Memorandum on the Situation after the Absorption of Czecho-Slovakia, and on the Policy of his Majesty's Government

[C 4319/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 29, 1939

Introductory.

1. The absorption of Czecho-Slovakia has clearly revealed Germany's intentions. It marks the first departure from the Nazi racial theory, under which the Reich would only include Germans within its boundaries, and there is every reason to suppose that the treatment applied to Czecho-Slovakia will be extended to other countries in Europe, notably Roumania and Poland.

2. Germany desires to avoid a war on two fronts, and her behaviour has created too many political enemies on her eastern frontiers. It is therefore her purpose gradually to neutralise these countries, deprive them of their armies and incorporate them in the German economic system. When this has been done, the way will have been prepared for an attack on the West.

3. Germany may seek to achieve her aims directly, by way of military attack, or indirectly, by undermining the independence of neighbouring States by processes of economic penetration or national disintegration, or by threat of force.

4. His Majesty's Government have been, and are still, engaged in consultation with a number of other Governments on the present situation, which is one of grave menace to the countries of Western Europe.

5. The policy of His Majesty's Government has been described by the Prime Minister in his statement in the House of Commons on March 23, as follows:

'We are solely concerned here with the proposition that we cannot submit to a procedure under which independent States are subjected to such pressure under threat of force as to be obliged to yield up their independence, and we are resolved by all means in our power to oppose attempts, if they should be made, to put such a procedure into operation.'

6. The purpose of the consultations upon which His Majesty's Government are engaged is to fortify, by as wide a measure of international collaboration as may be achieved, the natural resistance which States are bound to offer to attempts that may be made to constrain them, directly or indirectly, to yield up their independence.

7. The latest steps which His Majesty's Government have taken in pursuance of this policy are described in the telegrams to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Warsaw, and to His Majesty's Minister at Bucharest of the 27th March, annexed to the present memorandum (Annex I).¹

8. In Annex II will be found an appreciation of the situation in certain countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

¹ Not printed. These telegrams are printed as Nos. 537-8.

ANNEX II

Appreciation of the situation in Central and Eastern European countries.

Poland

1. The main objectives of Polish foreign policy, which has hitherto been conducted almost single-handedly by the present Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, have been to preserve the balance between Poland's two great neighbours, to avoid any irrevocable commitment to any country or group of countries, and by adroit manœuvring to obtain the status of a Great Power.

2. Except for the fact that Poland participated in sanctions against Italy in 1935, the trend of her policy since the German-Polish declaration of 1934 has been away from her connexion with the Western Powers towards Germany. This policy reached its climax in the autumn of 1938, when Poland gave up her seat on the Council of the League and shared in the dismemberment of Czecho-Slovakia. In December, however, Poland found herself threatened by German expansion eastwards, and in consequence the Polish Government refused to be drawn further towards alignment with the Axis. Since the beginning of this year, Polish policy has tended to swing back to co-operation with the Western Powers. Poland has regularised her relations with the Soviet Union and improved her relations with Roumania in a marked degree. Colonel Beck angled for and obtained an invitation to visit London, and recently allowed the French Foreign Minister to say that if France was attacked by Germany, Poland would fulfil her obligations under the Franco-Polish Treaty. (If France were attacked by Italy, the Polish attitude is uncertain.) Unfortunately, partly for personal reasons, the relations between M. Beck and the French Government remain far from cordial.

3. Poland also aspires to the position of guardian of the Baltic, and hankers after the creation of a neutral block stretching from the Baltic through Hungary to Italy.

4. The pro-German policy of Colonel Beck is not popular in Poland, where there is considerable anti-German and pro-French sentiment.

5. The German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia and Memel and the establishment of a German protectorate over Slovakia, including servitudes of a military character, have undermined the basis of Polish foreign policy. Poland is no longer in a position to sit comfortably on the fence between the Soviet Union and Germany. The frontiers which she has to defend against Germany have been greatly extended. The increase in German influence in Roumania constitutes a further threat to Poland. Circumstances would seem to dictate closer association with Russia, but there is much anti-Soviet feeling in Conservative and Catholic circles in Poland, and the Poles have not forgotten the Soviet invasion of 1921. Any open association with the Soviet Union in a group of States organised to resist German expansion would therefore be a very difficult matter for the Polish Government; and though in an emergency Poland might accept assistance from the Soviet Union in the form of war-material, she would probably decline to admit Soviet troops on her soil.

6. Poland has reached the parting of the ways, and will quickly have to choose between resistance to German expansion in co-operation with other States, and an agreement with Germany which would give her no guarantee against future dismemberment. In this respect Poland's position is vulnerable. She has a German minority of 800,000, at present unorganised, and the Ukrainian minority in South

East Poland numbers about 5 millions. Polish treatment of the Ukrainian minority question has not been happy, and events in Czecho-Slovakia have encouraged aspirations of Ukrainian autonomists. Poland therefore offers a fruitful field for the German technique of internal disruption.

7. The other Achilles heel of Poland is Danzig and the Corridor. While the population of the Corridor is predominantly Polish, the population of Danzig is overwhelmingly German. Danzig was given the international status of a Free City after the War, and her foreign relations were conducted by Poland, the object of the arrangement being to give Poland an outlet to the sea. The status of the Free City is guaranteed by the Council of the League of Nations. For some years past the Council has not been in a position to implement this guarantee, and in practice Poland has relied and must in future rely largely on her own resources to protect her rights in Danzig. Internally, Danzig is now a microcosm of the German Reich both in regard to internal organisation and legislation. It might at any moment declare for union with Germany. Danzig is therefore a pledge which Germany holds. The Polish Government have said that they will fight to protect their rights in Danzig, but in fact they would probably be prepared to reach a *modus vivendi* with Germany. It is however difficult to see how the latter could agree to any final solution of the Danzig question which did not involve the inclusion of Danzig in the German Reich.

8. The German occupation of Memel threatens Poland indirectly, by weakening Lithuania, and by giving the Germans an additional port in the Baltic. The Polish occupation of Teschen has increased her natural resources, but has created an additional point of friction with Germany, particularly in the area around Bogumin. The establishment of a common frontier with Hungary as a result of the Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia may be of certain strategical advantage to Poland, and Poland has attached the greatest importance to its achievement; but its value must to some extent be offset by the uncertain political orientation of Hungary, and by the possibility that concentrations of Hungarian troops on Roumania's northern frontier would neutralise any support which Poland might obtain from Roumania. For this reason the Polish Government is making great efforts to improve Hungarian-Roumanian relations.

9. The opposition parties and elements are rallying in support of a policy of national unity and of resistance to the German threat, and there is at the moment little doubt that the Poles would fight to resist any further threat to their independence. It may perhaps be doubtful how far this nationalist feeling would survive a partial surrender of the Polish position in Danzig and the Corridor, but observers generally agree that the morale of the Polish people is high.

Hungary

10. The primary objective of Hungarian foreign policy since the war has been the revision of the peace treaties and the recovery of the territories which she lost to her neighbours. Her relations with the Little Entente countries have therefore never been good, and the dispute between Yugoslavia and Hungary arising out of the murder of King Alexander in 1935 was only settled with great difficulty. Hungarian aims were partly achieved after Munich when, as the result of the Vienna Award, Hungary recovered large areas in the south of Slovakia and Ruthenia. She has now occupied the whole of Ruthenia and established a common frontier with Poland.

11. It was natural that Hungarian ambitions should bring Hungarian policy

into alignment with that of the Berlin-Rome Axis and Hungary was the first small country to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

12. The German occupation of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia has greatly increased the vulnerability of Hungary to German political and economic penetration and it is probably correct to say that Hungary is now definitely within the German orbit and to a large extent a vassal state of Germany. The widespread anti-semitic and anti-communist feeling in Hungary creates a certain sympathy with German aims, and there is a small National-Socialist party in Hungary, though it lacks leadership. On the other hand, disappointment with the Vienna Award and the influence of recent developments in German policy have also inspired some nationalist and anti-German feeling. The future role which Hungary will be either called upon or allowed to play will be revealed to a large extent by the attitude which she adopts towards Roumania. She may either act as an agent of German policy in the hope of recovering Transylvania, or abandon her claim to Transylvania and dissociate herself as far as she can and dare from any association with further German expansion. The position in Transylvania appears to be that while the Hungarian land-owners desire to come again under Hungarian rule the peasant population, who as a result of Roumanian agrarian policy have acquired the ownership of land, might be less anxious for a change.

13. Considerable efforts have been made both in Bucharest and Budapest in the last two years to improve relations between the two countries, but these have not gone very far. Similar efforts have been made to improve relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia with rather more success, though the disappearance of M. Stoyadinovitch to some extent retarded the process.

14. In the recent crisis the attitude of Hungary has been obscure, but it seems probable that Hungarian military measures have been in part directed against Roumania and were perhaps instrumental in securing the Roumanian acceptance of the German economic demands. The Hungarians have also refused to surrender to the Roumanians the eastern tip of Ruthenia. The Polish Government has been very active in trying to prevent a serious dispute arising between Hungary and Roumania.

15. Before the re-emergence of Germany as the predominant Power in Central Europe, Hungary was in the political and economic orbit of Italy. Apart from Germany and Italy, the country with whom Hungary has the closest relations is Poland.

Roumania

16. The German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia has caused deep alarm in Roumania where it is widely felt that Germany intends at no very distant date to march further eastwards in order to secure for herself Roumania's great wealth in raw materials. These fears are heightened as a result of Roumania's consciousness of her own military weakness.

17. The situation has been complicated by two factors, Roumania's relations with Hungary and the trade negotiations between Roumania and Germany.

Relations with Hungary.

18. Ever since the war Hungary has claimed the return of Transylvania where there is a large Hungarian minority which has not been well treated by the Roumanians. The Little Entente was designed particularly to prevent Hungary from seeking to secure by war the return of the territory taken from her. All the same, Hungary's occupation of Ruthenia would not in itself, since the disappear-

ance of Czecho-Slovakia, have been unwelcome to Roumania, who might have preferred it to direct German domination. Unfortunately disagreement has arisen between Hungary and Roumania as to the manner of this occupation.

19. The Hungarian occupation of a fresh strip of Slovakia greatly increased Roumania's fear that with German instigation Hungary might be contemplating an attempt to regain Transylvania by force of arms. Negotiations between Hungary and Roumania for simultaneous demobilisation are proceeding. Each side accuses the other of having begun the process and argues that the other should be the first to demobilise. The British, French and Polish representatives in Budapest and Bucharest have been working to bring the two sides together.

Economic Negotiations with Germany.

20. At the time of the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia economic negotiations were in progress between Roumania and Germany. The Roumanian Minister in London has alleged that the Germans proposed that Roumania should agree to a German monopoly of her exports and to a restriction of her industries to Germany's interests and that in return Germany would guarantee Roumania's frontiers; he maintained that this proposal had been accompanied by some form of ultimatum. The Roumanian Government and King Carol personally have categorically denied that there was any ultimatum. A trade agreement between Roumania and Germany has now been signed which certainly seems to offer scope for the organisation of Roumania's economy on lines very favourable to Germany. The Roumanian Government have, however, assured His Majesty's Government of their desire to receive a British trade mission and have publicly declared their readiness to conclude a similar agreement with other Powers. It is conceivable that the Roumanian Government may succeed in restricting the application of the agreement in such a manner as to eliminate its more obvious dangers, while on the other hand the Germans may not in practice be in a position to exploit its possibilities to the full. Meanwhile the Roumanian Government have asked for British assistance with which to buy armaments. It should be added, however, that the agreement with Germany provides for the delivery of armaments and equipment for the Roumanian forces, the German Government having given assurances beforehand that they would permit the fulfilment of the outstanding Roumanian armament contracts in Czecho-Slovakia. It is not clear whether this includes the purchase from the Czech army of the equipment of 4 Divisions. In these circumstances His Majesty's Minister at Bucharest has been instructed to ascertain whether the request for assistance in the matter of armaments still stands.

21. These have been the most immediate results in Roumania of the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. In general Roumania is, as has already been indicated, fearful of direct attack either from Germany and Hungary together or from Germany alone. In these circumstances she is doubly anxious to avoid provoking Germany in any way and she therefore deprecates any form of pact of mutual assistance; she would, however, welcome a declaration by the Western Powers that they will not allow any further changes of frontier and will support with all the military forces at their disposal any state that defends its independence. The question of Bessarabia stands between Roumania and Soviet Russia, and for this and for ideological reasons Roumania would find it embarrassing to enter into any combination in which Soviet Russia was included.

22. Meanwhile Roumania has stated that she is determined to defend her boundaries and independence, and that she will resist any attack on her frontier

by arms. Her ability to do so would however depend to a large extent on the measure of support which she might receive from the Western Powers. In the event of a war breaking out elsewhere Roumania would probably seek to remain neutral until she could judge with certainty which side would win; her sympathies would, however, be with the Western Powers and she might possibly join them from the start if assured of immediate and effective military support.

23. It should be added that if Bulgaria either alone or in concert with other Powers attacked Roumania in order to secure the return of the Dobrudja, the other members of the Balkan Entente (Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey) would be under obligation to come to her assistance. (This would not be the case if Roumania were attacked by Germany or Hungary.) Yugoslavia would be unlikely to move in the face of a hostile Italy and Germany, but the Turkish Government have recently informed the Bulgarian President of the Council that they would fulfil their obligations under the Balkan Pact even if they had to do so alone. Greece has also stated that she will fulfil her obligations under the Balkan Pact. As regards a guarantee of Roumania's frontiers going beyond the limits of the Balkan Pact (i.e. in the event of an attack by any other State except Hungary) [*sic* ? Bulgaria] Greece will examine sympathetically and in collaboration with Turkey and Yugoslavia any Roumanian proposal, while taking into account the eventual attitude of Great Britain and France.

Yugoslavia

24. Yugoslavia's foreign policy is based on fear of Italy and Germany, with whom she has common frontiers. In the past Italy has made repeated efforts to undermine the stability of Yugoslavia; more recently, since Signor Mussolini's Milan speech of November, 1936, Italy has altered her policy towards Yugoslavia and has sought by every means to win her friendship; but suspicion of Italy's ambitions still remains. Since the annexation of Austria by Germany, Yugoslavia has realised that she also may be directly threatened by Germany's march eastwards. At the same time the inability of the Serbs and Croats to co-operate in running the Centralised State and the failure up till now to introduce any workable system of decentralisation or federalism make her very vulnerable to the German technique of disintegrating the State by exploiting and inciting discontented minorities (on the other hand it is not in Italy's interest to allow such disintegration since it would open the way for Germany to penetrate down to the Adriatic and the Aegean).

25. Exposed as she is to attack by Germany and Italy and conscious that it would be scarcely possible for the Western Powers to afford her in time effective military support, Yugoslavia, under the government of Prince Paul and M. Stoyadinovitch, pursued with considerable success a policy of keeping on good terms with everyone, that is to say the Berlin-Rome Axis, her other neighbours and the Western Powers. There is little doubt that this policy will be continued in the future, though possibly with less psychological bias in favour of the totalitarian Powers.

26. Against this background the German annexation of Czecho-Slovakia came as a most unpleasant shock to Yugoslavia, particularly since it represented the first stage of a new policy by which the German Reich incorporates non-Germans. There was a feeling of astonishment that the Czechs should have yielded so tamely and it was generally asserted that in similar circumstances Yugoslavia would resist, however hopeless the fight. The prestige of the Western Powers has suffered

a severe set-back, but there are still hopes that they may be able and willing to call a halt to the advance of the totalitarian States.

27. While apprehensive as to possible developments, Yugoslavia does not regard herself as immediately threatened and has taken no special measures as the result of the fall of Czecho-Slovakia; the main result will be to make her even more careful than before to avoid offending either Italy or Germany. Further as long as Italy stands firmly by Germany, Yugoslavia will join no coalition against them. If war were to break out, she would struggle desperately to maintain her neutrality; though her sympathies might be with the Western Powers, pressure from the Axis might compel her neutrality to be grudgingly benevolent to the enemy; she would only engage in war against them if she felt absolutely confident that the Western Powers would win and win soon.

28. His Majesty's Minister at Belgrade has expressed the opinion that if Hungary participated in an attack on Roumania, Yugoslav troops might invade Hungary, whilst keeping clear of German troops (the Yugoslav-Roumanian Treaty provides for common defence against Hungary and Bulgaria, but not against Germany).

Soviet Union

29. Immediately before the collapse of Czecho-Slovakia the Soviet Government were more confident of the strength of their international position than they had been for many months previously. The German plans for an advance towards the Ukraine had been shelved, if not finally abandoned. Poland had been sufficiently alarmed by these plans to conclude with the Soviet Union a trade agreement which, important in itself, was undoubtedly dictated primarily by political rather than economic considerations; and this *rapprochement* or *quasi-rapprochement* with Poland had been followed up by a general drive on the part of the Soviet Government to strengthen their relations with other countries by economic agreements. Finnish, Roumanian and Persian trade delegations visited Moscow; Soviet-Italian commercial relations were placed on a more satisfactory footing by the conclusion of an agreement which removed most of the outstanding causes of dispute; Germany herself had embarked on preliminary commercial discussions of considerable scope, and had markedly toned down her anti-Soviet propaganda; finally, the announcement of the forthcoming visit of a British trade delegation to Moscow with a view to exploring the possibility of concluding a permanent Anglo-Soviet commercial treaty was accompanied by many indications, if not of a fundamental change of public sentiment in Great Britain towards the Soviet Union, at least of a greater willingness to co-operate with that country in the international sphere. The isolation in which the Soviet Government had found themselves for upwards of a year and a half was rapidly breaking down, and the only serious cloud on the Soviet horizon was the increasing tension with Japan over the question of the Far Eastern fisheries.

30. The complacency of the Soviet Government was probably shaken to some extent by the final collapse of Czecho-Slovakia and the annexation of the Memelland, though there was no outward indication that this was so. Such anxiety as they may have felt was doubtless due in the main to the possible reaction of these developments on the independence of Roumania, a neighbour in whom they still retained some faith as a potential buffer against German aggression in the Ukraine. The official line taken by the Soviet press was that these events were the inevitable result of the weakness and cowardice of the Western democracies, and that the

Germans were clearly 'safeguarding their rear before turning westwards'; and the Soviet Government may well have persuaded themselves that this was in fact a possible interpretation of German intentions in the immediate future.

31. It may be supposed that they would be no more willing than are Great Britain and France to see Germany acquire new sources of economic strength in Central and Eastern Europe; but Soviet policy is invariably opportunist, and the Soviet Government had been willing, at a moment when it was by no means certain that they had nothing to fear from German aggression, to conclude with Germany a commercial agreement involving the supply to that country of large quantities of Soviet raw materials which could only be used for armaments.

32. Strategically the position was but little changed in so far as the Soviet Union was concerned, save possibly in regard to Roumania: Czecho-Slovakia had no doubt been 'written off' by the Soviet Government after Munich as a foothold for military operations against the Reich, and Hungary was already regarded by them as sold to Germany; the annexation of the Memelland was an event long anticipated, and would inevitably have occurred in any case on the outbreak of general hostilities, while Lithuania herself, under the pressure of German threats, had already ceased to be regarded by the Soviet Government as a buffer State of any value.

33. The Soviet Government's response to the British proposals for a joint declaration of willingness to consult with a view to resisting aggression was favourable, as might have been expected. Despite the lull in the propaganda war between Germany and the Soviet Union, the essential hostility of the two countries was such that the Soviet Government clearly had nothing to lose by publicly subscribing to this declaration, which was, indeed, a move on the lines which M. Litvinov had advocated for years. Whatever the real intentions of the Soviet Government may be in the matter of co-operation with the Western democracies in the event of war with Germany, their position, whether internal or external, cannot fail to be strengthened by a show of willingness to co-operate on a common front against the Axis Powers, especially when, as in the case of the British proposals, the initiative is taken by others.

Scandinavian and Baltic States

34. There is little to be said of the reactions of these countries to the collapse of Czecho-Slovakia and the annexation of the Memelland. As was to be expected, these events were regarded by them with consternation; and the first comments of the Swedish press, it may be noted, were marked by bitter criticism of the Western Powers for their feebleness in the face of German aggression. Certain suggestions made in the House of Commons, regarding the possibility of British assistance to the Scandinavian countries in the event of their being attacked, evoked from the President of the Norwegian Storting a nervous declaration that these countries did not desire a guarantee by any foreign power or group of powers, and that their policy of neutrality must be based solely on their own ability and intention to defend it in all circumstances. The British proposals for a joint declaration of willingness to resist aggression were approved by public opinion in most of the northern countries (which were not, of course, directly concerned); but the prospect of a closer collaboration between Great Britain and the Soviet Union inevitably gave rise to much unfavourable comment in Finland, where dislike and distrust of the Soviet Government have always been of paramount importance in moulding public opinion.

APPENDIX V

Memorandum on the German Military Situation

Letter from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes to Mr. Strang

[C 4760/13/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *March 29, 1939*

My telegram No. 196¹ of March 28.

The Military Attaché here is in a very warlike mood and is anxious that we should declare war on Germany within the next three weeks! It was suggested to him privately that he should first express his views in writing. Just as the bag is about to leave he has now delivered, in the form of an official communication dated March 29, a memorandum which ranges far outside his ambit and the purport of which is that we should go to war within the next month (page 7, second paragraph).²

I have not time to study it or to comment on it, even were my comments called for, which I do not consider they are, as the issues raised are for the Cabinet rather than for a Chargé d'Affaires in a necessarily 'blinkered' post to offer unasked. Even on the military aspect of this memorandum I have reason to believe that the other Service Attachés have not been consulted.

I wish once more to emphasise that the views expressed in my telegrams Nos. 187,³ 192⁴ and 193⁵ were those of the Military Attaché and his foreign colleagues, and not mine.

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes pointed out that the view expressed in Berlin telegrams Nos. 187, 192, and 193 (see below) were 'those of the Military Attaché on the military aspect of the situation'.

² i.e. the passage beginning: 'And if we wait longer. . . ' on p. 627.

³ No. 522.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram of March 28 reported the view of the Yugoslav Military Attaché that the present was the most favourable moment to accept battle with the Axis.

⁵ Not printed. This telegram of March 28 reported that the Roumanian Military Attaché agreed with the view of his Yugoslav colleague.

ENCLOSURE I

BERLIN, *March 29, 1939*

Sir,

In accordance with your request I have the honour to submit a memorandum setting forth my views on the military situation created by Germany's advances in the east during the past month. It is not within my province to attempt to produce a detailed appreciation of the situation which has developed. My paper comprises a brief review on broad lines of the effects of recent events on Germany's power on land, and includes my views on the future.

I have, &c.,
F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE
Colonel, Military Attaché.

BERLIN, *March 28, 1939*

The following is an endeavour to state broadly and briefly, more especially from the point of view of warfare on the ground, the effects of Germany's recent action in Czecho-Slovakia, and their influence on the military situation.

No definite information is as yet available as to the extent to which the Germans propose to use Czech personnel in their armed forces. Sudeten Germans will naturally be employed in fighting units, but after the old Austro-Hungarian Army's experiences of Czech units when fighting for a cause for which they had little sympathy, it is most unlikely that the Germans will use Czech personnel to any great extent for other than administrative units. There is a possibility that the Germans might be tempted to retain a certain number of units and formations of the old Czech Army for action against the Poles or Hungarians, against both of which countries feeling in Czech territory runs very high. It is however at least unlikely, although my Germanophobe Czech colleague assured me last October that in two years' time he would be fighting me on the Rhine.

It appears that in addition to the armament of permanent works, the Germans have secured sufficient armament to equip some 40 Divisions. They also ought to have acquired equivalent war stocks of munitions and have taken over the factories responsible for their manufacture. Sudeten man-power, trained in these weapons, sufficient to provide some 20 Divisions is probably available, but would require considerable training before being capable of taking the field in the shape of formations, and owing to the fact that the arms and munitions are not of German pattern, the various units and formations would have to be employed in definite areas on their own, and could not be mixed up with German ones for obvious reasons of supply. Furthermore, Sudeten Germans were not admitted into all the fighting arms of the Czecho-Slovak Service, and there would be no trained men at all in the meantime to form certain types of unit.

Apart from the acquisition of arms and of a flourishing armament industry, Germany has gained the following military advantages:—

- (a) A potential enemy in the shape of what was left of the Czech Army after Munich has been eliminated.
- (b) The German frontier has been very considerably shortened. The frontier with Poland has been very little increased, but the facilities for striking Poland from the South-West have been greatly augmented. The Slovak State, which is now virtually part of Germany and which will contain German military establishments and doubtless a small German garrison as well, has a long boundary with Hungary. Hungary is now more or less face to face with Germany in the North as well as in the West.
- (c) It is true that Hungary's occupation of Ruthenia has given Hungary and Poland the common frontier which Germany had previously appeared unwilling to concede. I believe, however, that in Germany's present successful and 'exalted' condition this circumstance is looked upon as being of next to no importance.

In including the Czech people within the Reich Herr Hitler has departed from his declared principles. It may be argued that in time of war this alien population might well be expected to cause trouble. This is possible, but German methods of disseminating labour all over the Reich, and rigorous German control—coupled with the fact that the Czech nation has had all the heart knocked out of it since

last autumn—makes it unlikely. The Germans will nevertheless be confronted with an internal security problem different from and more difficult than their normal ones.

Before discussing the effect of recent events on the German Army's present and future capacity for dealing with a major war it is necessary to consider the effect which Herr Hitler's latest *coup* has had upon the countries of eastern and south-eastern Europe.

The surprise and success effected have made a profound impression. In the north Lithuania has given up Memelland, has apparently made her peace with Germany, and has added to Poland's apprehensions.

Roumania has been almost completely deprived of her sources of armament supply, and Yugoslavia of a large proportion of hers. Roumania has deliberately (although one hopes it may be temporarily and cunningly) made her peace. Yugoslavia is now experiencing the repercussions of violent German propaganda in Croatia.

Hungary, although fully aware of the disadvantages of German domination, is even more afraid of Russia and Communism, and a large proportion of the population are National-Socialist minded. Through Germany and through Germany alone does she see any real prospect of re-acquiring Transylvania. It looks as if she must perforce throw in her lot with Germany, and her inclusion in the Axis is a *fait accompli*.

The situation from our point of view looks black. The chances of establishing an 'eastern front' farther west than the frontiers of Russia, Turkey and Greece are receding daily. And only by establishing such a front can we hope in war to bring Germany *quickly* to heel by our one effective weapon—Blockade.

How can we establish the front we desire, and by which alone we seem likely to be able to avoid the possibility of disaster in three or four years time? By making it clear to all concerned—secretly and without advertising Russia's share in the arrangement—that from the military point of view Germany is now not capable of tackling a major war in which she would have to fight for and hold the economic areas possession of which is essential to her if she is to be able to resist blockade for more than a few months. We must make it clear that any further aggression on Germany's part—whether by force of arms or merely in the shape of economic pressure supported by menace—will immediately entail armed intervention by France and ourselves. To succeed in this we must convince those concerned of the rapid results now being achieved as regards our rearmament, and we must do everything possible to demonstrate that we are indeed in a position to react with adequate rapidity and efficiency to the German technique of surprise which forms their principal obsession.

We must further ensure that should Germany decline to continue her aggressive role a situation is created in which she is forced to take action. Reports of (or even actual) illtreatment of Germans in any of the countries concerned would probably suffice to make Herr Hitler act. His public has learnt enough to believe neither.

Let us examine firstly Germany's situation at the moment. From the point of view of the German Army it is extremely unsound. A considerable proportion of the active Army—unmobilised and in many cases much under peace strength—is scattered throughout Moravia and Bohemia, with elements in Slovakia. Up to 25 Divisions were affected by the initial operation, although in certain cases troops have definitely by now commenced returning to their peace stations in Germany. It must be at least several months before the Germans can hope to produce units

or formations with the help of the arms they have acquired from the Czechs. The process will call for the services of many officers and N.C.O.s who can ill be spared from the active German Army.

Germany is at the moment capable of mobilising a total of little more than 100 Divisions all told—Active, Reserve, and Landwehr. Can she under existing circumstances embark on a war on the Western Front simultaneously with war against Poland and Yugoslavia if she is forced to fight for and hold Roumania and part of the Ukraine to give her even a temporary respite from the effects of the blockade to which she would be immediately subjected?

It is surely far more than doubtful. It may be argued that Italy will assist in relieving the strain in the West and *vis-à-vis* Yugoslavia. Further that Hungary and possibly Bulgaria will almost certainly join in against Roumania. But if we show that we really mean business, and if we make the military situation clear to Hungary and Bulgaria, there seems more than a possibility that they might be induced to stand aloof—if not firm. Hungary has far closer ties with Poland than with Germany.

If we can only convince our potential allies in the east of the patent fact that Germany is in no position to fight a major war now with any hope of evading inevitable and swift strangulation, there seems every reason why we should do our best to produce a situation leading to such a war and definitely welcome it. It is indeed, in my opinion, the only sound solution to the problem with which we are faced.

What if we wait on events and take no definite action, and thereby continue to give our potential allies the impression that we are too unprepared, or more correctly perhaps too cautious, or too fearful, to risk a fight?

We would take this course presumably in the hope that Germany would probably come to grief economically and financially; that an automatic check would be placed on her rearmament; and that the German people would refuse to go on living indefinitely under the conditions to which they are now subjected. Can we really count on these hopes? Are we not much more likely to see Germany establishing herself more and more firmly in Eastern Europe and securing without fighting not only the 'Lebensraum' necessary to make her blockade-proof for some time, but also the economic and financial resources to enable her to continue her armament programme unabated? Furthermore Germany will automatically avoid having to take the offensive in the East and may even be faced with no eastern front at all. What happens then to us, with Germany steadily drawing away from our efforts to keep pace in the Army armament race and confronted with a one-front war or something very like it? It may well be the end of France and ultimately of ourselves, unless Herr Hitler is unexpectedly wafted to Walhalla or elsewhere.

War is often a gamble. It may be said that a war to increase our security in the future is not worth risking. But we will be fighting for more than that. We will be fighting to avoid what I believe to be almost certain eventual elimination.

What if we wait till the autumn? The insidious work of German propaganda, the increasing distrust of our capacity and will to fight, and the menace of ever-increasing German military power, must inevitably react on our potential friends. Germany will have a breathing space. She will again, as in 1938, be able to gain a flying start over all others by the process of partial mobilisation under the cloak of Reserve training. As I have often said, she can again at this period reach a peak of military efficiency at a time of year which will suit her best to give battle. She

will not be very appreciably stronger than she is now. But she will have had time to put her house in order, and this fact alone may finally affect the decision—if not previously taken—of our potential friends to let us down and bow to the bully at the gate.

I have also pointed out on previous occasions that during next winter the German Army will again be in difficulties over expansion and with a new class of only partially trained recruits. That is still true, and the events of this month may well increase these difficulties. But, by that time, shall we not have lost all hope of securing the front of the 'nearer' East which we *must* have?

And if we wait longer?

Can we be sure that America will feel as she is feeling now? Can we hope to compete with the totalitarian rate of armament? The French can probably do little more as regards ground forces. We shall work up to some 20 Divisions? In the meantime the Germans are in a position to produce at least 50 Divisions next year, and arms for not less than 15 per year thereafter. Inevitably our friends in the east will lose heart and conceivably actually join the German Camp.

Nothing but the internal disruption of Germany can save us. Have we any right to consider such disruption more than an outside possibility?

It is true that grave elements of discontent within the country exist. But to produce the organised resistance to the Party or dissension within its ranks which can alone produce disruption, something more than a continuation or even an appreciable increase in the present perfectly bearable 'hardships' and inconveniences under which the German people suffer is required. War, and war now with a 'near' eastern front, would hit them hard and quickly and might well produce the hoped-for results. Without war, and with increasing benefits from Germany's eastern neighbours, these results may never be achieved.

Germany has a formidable Air Force. But an Air Force cannot capture and hold. That can be done by ground forces alone. Provided we can convince our potential allies of this, and can make them realise that against a united front Germany is *not* in a position to avoid speedy elimination by blockade, we can surely accept the gage flung down by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini in Europe. It is a challenge we should accept at once, with every prospect of speedy victory. If we delay I believe that from the military point of view we shall be taking an unwarrantable risk, and an infinitely greater one than war in the immediate future *ought* to represent if we play our cards properly and swiftly. Autocracy is relying on Plutocracy's lack of courage to face the immediate although *relatively* considerable danger.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE
Colonel, Military Attaché.

APPENDIX VI

Negotiations concerning a voluntary limitation of capital ships and the exchange of information on naval matters

(i)

Viscount Halifax to the German Ambassador¹

[A 4850/55/45]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 30, 1938

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that, although the new limits for the standard displacement of capital ships under the Anglo-German Agreement of July 17, 1937,² have, as set out in the Protocol signed on June 30, 1938,³ been fixed at 45,000 tons (45,720 metric tons), His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom do not at present intend to construct vessels of more than 40,000 tons (40,640 metric tons). In accordance with this intention the two capital ships provided for in the current year's estimates, and which are to be laid down later in the year, will not exceed 40,000 tons (40,640 metric tons) standard displacement.

2. His Majesty's Government earnestly trust that no European Government will find it necessary for the present to exceed the figure of 40,000 tons (40,640 metric tons) mentioned above and they would be glad to receive from your Government as soon as possible a statement of their intentions in the matter. Should it at any time be found necessary to construct capital ships of a higher tonnage than 40,000 tons (40,640 metric tons) His Majesty's Government would effect notification of such intention in the ordinary way in accordance with the provisions of the Anglo-German Agreement, 1937, providing for advance notification and exchange of information.

I have, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ On the same date letters were sent to the French Ambassador and the United States Chargé d'Affaires in similar terms, *mutatis mutandis*, but referring to the London Naval Treaty of March 25, 1936 (printed in Cmd. 5561 (Treaty Series No. 36) of 1937), and the Protocol of June 30, 1938 (printed in Cmd. 5781 (Treaty Series No. 43) of 1938) in place of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and Protocol; the letter to the United States Chargé d'Affaires also omitted the first sentence of paragraph 2 above. On July 6 a letter in similar terms, *mutatis mutandis*, was sent to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires but referring to the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of June 17, 1937 (printed in Cmd. 5679 (Treaty Series No. 17) of 1938, and the Protocol of July 6, 1938 (printed in Cmd. 6074 (Treaty Series No. 39) of 1939).

² Printed in Cmd. 5637 (Treaty Series No. 2) of 1937.

³ Printed in Cmd. 5834 (Treaty Series No. 56) of 1938.

(ii)

Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received September 10)

No. 396 [A 7039/55/45]

MOSCOW, September 6, 1938

His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a translation of a Note from the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (ii)

(Translation.)

MOSCOW, September 5, 1938

Mr. Ambassador,

With reference to your letter of June 21¹ last addressed to the People's Commissar, M. M. Litvinov, whereby you informed the Soviet Government of the intention of the Government of Great Britain not to construct capital ships of a displacement exceeding 40,000 tons, I have the honour to inform you that in view of the refusal of Japan to bind herself by any obligations in the matter of naval construction the Government of the U.S.S.R. will refrain from reducing the upper limit for constructing new capital ships established by the Anglo-Soviet Protocol signed on July 6 last in London.

I avail myself of the opportunity to assure you of my highest consideration.

V. POTYOMKIN

¹ No copy of this letter appears to have been sent to the Foreign Office. On June 20 Lord Chilston was informed that the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires had been given on June 3 a copy of the draft Protocol proposing the new displacement limit of 45,000 tons for capital ships and of a draft Note proposing voluntary limitation to 40,000 tons. H.M. Embassy were instructed to make urgent representations to the Soviet Government for their concurrence in the terms of the Protocol, but were informed that consideration of the voluntary limitation was not so urgent.

(iii)

Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received November 4)

No. 462 [A 8258/55/45]

MOSCOW, November 1, 1938

His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him copy of a Note to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (iii)

No. 338

MOSCOW, November 1, 1938

Monsieur le Commissaire du Peuple,

In his letter of September 5¹ last M. Potyomkin informed me with reference to my letter to you of June 21² last regarding the intention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for the present time voluntarily to confine to 40,000 tons the upper limit of displacement of their capital ships of Sub-Category A of the

¹ Enclosure in Document (ii) in this Appendix.

² See Document (ii) in this Appendix, note 1.

London Naval Treaty of 1936, that, in view of the refusal of Japan to bind herself by any obligations in the matter of naval construction, the Soviet Government would refrain from reducing the upper limit for constructing new capital ships established by the Anglo-Soviet Protocol signed on July 6 last in London.

For the following reasons this statement of the attitude of the Soviet Government would seem to show a misunderstanding by them of the situation.

As Your Excellency is aware it was in view of the fact that the Japanese Government had refused to bind themselves to any qualitative limitations that it was specifically provided in article 2 of the Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreement of 1937 that the Soviet Government should be free from the limitations and restrictions of Part II of that Agreement in so far as the Soviet Far Eastern Naval Forces were concerned. In other words, the Soviet Government, acting on the assumption that the Japanese Government had exceeded the 35,000 ton limit, were at liberty to build capital ships for the Soviet Far East Naval Forces up to any size provided of course that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom were notified in advance of their intentions. It was thought that by this proviso the Soviet Government would be fully protected against the position which would arise if the Japanese Government failed to observe the 35,000 ton limit. In those circumstances, the request addressed to the Soviet Government by His Majesty's Government on July 6³ that the latter should voluntarily limit themselves to 40,000 tons for capital ships, so long as other European Powers did the same, related of course only to that class of vessel in respect of which the Soviet Government had under the Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreement to abide by certain limitations. As such an undertaking had not been given by the Soviet Government in respect of the Soviet Far Eastern Naval Forces, the request of His Majesty's Government did not apply to such vessels.

In the opinion of His Majesty's Government, therefore, the reason put forward by the Soviet Government for declining to meet the request of His Majesty's Government is hardly relevant seeing that the situation of the Soviet Government *vis-à-vis* the Japanese Government is already fully met by the absence of any restriction in respect of the Soviet Far Eastern Fleet. His Majesty's Government, in these circumstances, do not understand why the Soviet Government should not accept a voluntary limitation of 40,000 tons in respect of their European Fleet, which was all that was proposed by His Majesty's Government and I am therefore instructed to express the hope that upon reconsideration of this question the Soviet Government will be prepared for the present voluntarily to confine to 40,000 tons the upper limit of displacement of their capital ships of Sub-Category A of the London Naval Treaty of 1936 other than those for service in the Far East. In accepting this proposal the Soviet Government, if they so desire, can make it clear that such action would not of course affect the right reserved to them under the Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreement of 1937 to construct capital ships of whatever displacement they like for their Far Eastern Fleet.

I have, &c.,

CHILSTON

³ See Document (i) in this Appendix, note 1.

(iv)

Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received November 19)

No. 478 [A 8740/55/45]

MOSCOW, November 15, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith to Your Lordship a translation of a Note dated November 14 from M. Litvinov in reply to the Note which I addressed to him on November 1 last, and a copy of which was enclosed under cover of my despatch No. 462¹ of that date, on the subject of the desire of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that the Soviet Government should for the present time agree voluntarily to confine to 40,000 tons the upper limit of displacement of their capital ships of Sub-Category A of the London Treaty of 1936.

I have, &c.,

CHILSTON

¹ Document (iii) in this Appendix.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (iv)

(Translation.)

MOSCOW, November 14, 1938

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

Replying to your Note of November 1 I have the honour to state that the decision of the Soviet Government not to be bound by any further restrictions, although of a voluntary character, in the matter of naval construction was reached after a careful study of the international situation which has taken shape and is now more clearly crystallised. As they do not consider to be excluded the possibility of operations of the Japanese navy, individually or together with the navies of other countries also in European waters, the Soviet Government are unable to refrain from maintaining the maximum freedom in the utilisation of their naval forces for the defence of any of their naval frontiers. This decision has already been put into practical application in the laying down of a battleship of over forty thousand tons, as seen from the particulars given you on November 1.

I avail myself of this opportunity to state that the Soviet Government do not intend in the future to accept any restrictions affecting the defence forces of the country by international agreements, unless they participate in all stages of the working out of those agreements.

Receive Monsieur l'Ambassadeur the assurance of my high esteem towards you.

M. LITVINOV

(v)

Letter from Mr. Holman to Herr Schlitter (German Embassy)

[A 8664/55/45]

FOREIGN OFFICE, November 29, 1938

Dear Schlitter,

It will be remembered that, during the various naval discussions which have taken place during the last few years, the question has arisen of the desirability of preparing a draft Protocol providing for advance notification and the exchange of

information between all Powers who are either signatories of the London Naval Treaty 1936 or bilateral naval Agreements subsequently concluded by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. As you know, the position at present is that the London Naval Treaty Powers exchange information amongst themselves, whilst His Majesty's Government only exchanges information with signatories of bilateral Agreements subject to certain limitations, exceptions and reservations indicated therein. It is in order to generalise the exchange of information amongst all concerned that the present draft, copy of which is enclosed herein, has been prepared.

I shall be glad if you will submit the draft in question to your Government for their consideration, and will let me know at your early convenience any observations which they may wish to offer thereon.

Copies of the draft are being sent to the signatories of the London Naval Treaty 1936 and the Governments of Germany, Poland and Soviet Russia. Similar action will be taken *vis-à-vis* the Italian Government after their accession to the London Naval Treaty 1936.¹

A. HOLMAN

¹ Similar letters, *mutatis mutandis*, were sent on November 29 to the French, United States, Soviet, and Polish Embassies, and on December 3 to the Italian Embassy. Copies of the draft Protocol were also communicated to the Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and India.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (v)

PROTOCOL.

Whereas Part III of the Naval Treaty signed in London on the 25th March, 1936 (hereinafter called the London Naval Treaty), provides for advance notification and exchange of information between the parties thereto, concerning naval construction and acquisition;

And whereas Part III of the Naval Agreements between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the German Government and the Government of the U.S.S.R. respectively, both signed on the 17th July, 1937 (hereinafter called the Anglo-German and Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreements), make (subject to the limitations, exceptions and reservations indicated therein) similar provision as between the Government of the United Kingdom on the one hand and the German Government and the Government of the U.S.S.R. respectively on the other;

And whereas it is desirable to make general provision for giving advance notification and to exchange information concerning naval construction and acquisition;

The Undersigned, duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have agreed as follows:—

1. The provisions of Part III of the London Naval Treaty shall, in so far as not already in force for any contracting Government in virtue of the said Treaty, be deemed to be in force as between all the contracting Governments; provided

(1) that the rights and obligations in this respect of any contracting Government having a Naval Agreement with the Government of the United Kingdom providing for notification and exchange of information shall be subject to the same limitations, exceptions and reservations as may be indicated in the corresponding provisions of that Agreement;

(2) that the rights and obligations of the Government of the United Kingdom in regard to any other contracting Government with whom it has a Naval Agreement providing for notification and exchange of information shall be determined by that Agreement.

2. In the event of information being given by any contracting Government under Article 25 (5) or (6) or 26 (4) or (5) of the London Naval Treaty or of any similar Naval Agreement with the Government of the United Kingdom, or under Article 6 (3) of the Anglo-German or Anglo-Soviet Naval Agreements or any corresponding Article in any similar Naval Agreement with the Government of the United Kingdom, the same information shall be given under the same conditions to all the other contracting Governments.

3. In the event of the obligations of any contracting Government in regard to advance notification and exchange of information under the London Naval Treaty or under any similar Naval Agreement between that Government and the Government of the United Kingdom, being terminated, suspended or modified, the obligations of that Government under the present Protocol shall be deemed to be similarly terminated, suspended or modified, provided that a notification to that effect shall be made to the other contracting Governments whose obligations to that Government shall thereupon be similarly terminated, suspended or modified.

4. The present Protocol shall be open to accession at any time on the part of the Government of any Power which has concluded with the Government of the United Kingdom a Naval Agreement similar to the London Naval Treaty. Accessions shall be notified to the Government of the United Kingdom by whom they will be communicated to all the other contracting Governments. They shall take effect immediately.

5. The present Protocol, of which the French and English texts shall both be equally authentic, shall come into force on the date of signature, and shall remain in force until the 31st December, 1942.

In faith whereof the Undersigned have signed the present Protocol and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in London the

day of

19 .

(vi)

M. Cambon to Viscount Halifax (Received January 3)

No. 665 [A 24/24/45]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE EN ANGLETERRE, LONDRES, le 31 décembre 1938

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'État,

Par une lettre du 29 novembre¹ (A. 8664/55/45), le Foreign Office a bien voulu communiquer à l'Ambassade le texte d'un projet de Protocole additionnel à tous les traités navals conclus depuis 1936 et destiné à généraliser les règles contenues dans la partie III du Traité Naval de Londres relativement aux préavis et aux informations à échanger entre États signataires au sujet des constructions de navires de guerre.

Le Gouvernement français, à qui l'Ambassade n'avait pas manqué de communiquer ce document, me charge de faire savoir à Votre Excellence qu'il approuve sa rédaction et ne verrait que des avantages à ce que le Protocole dont il s'agit fût adopté dans la forme suggérée par le Gouvernement britannique.

¹ See Document (v) in this Appendix, note 1.

Si toutefois certaines Puissances ne se montraient disposées à l'accepter que comme base de discussion, mon Gouvernement tiendrait essentiellement à prendre part aux négociations qui s'ouvriraient à ce sujet afin de sauvegarder la réciprocité rigoureuse des échanges de renseignements entre les signataires des différents traités navals.

Veuillez agréer &c.,
ROGER CAMBON

(vii)

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received January 23)

No. 44 [A 558/87/45]

ROME, January 19, 1939

His Majesty's Representative at Rome presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith copy of a Note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (vii)

(Translation)

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ROME, January 17, 1939-XVII

(600273/3)

Your Excellency,

In reply to the Note which your Government addressed to the Royal Ambassador in London, dated December 1,¹ relative to the tonnage of capital ships, I have the honour to inform you that, although the new maximum limit fixed for capital ships in the Protocol of June 30, 1938,² additional to the Naval Treaty of March 25, 1936,³ is 45,000 tons, the Italian Government have not the intention of exceeding the limit of 40,000 for the ships which will be eventually laid down in 1939.

My Government has always been of the opinion that the displacement of capital ships should be kept as low as possible; and they hope that the reciprocal intention of Great Britain and Italy not to exceed the limit of 40,000 tons may contribute towards the acceptance, in the future as now, by all the Powers which are linked by naval agreements with Great Britain, of the idea of not exceeding this limit and that on these bases it will be possible to reach a general agreement.

If the Italian Government should find it necessary to construct capital ships of a tonnage superior to 40,000, they will not fail to give notification of it to the other interested parties, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of London of 1936.

Pray accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

CIANO

¹ This Note, in terms identical with those of the letter to the French Ambassador of June 30 (see Document (i) in this Appendix, note 1), was handed to the Italian Ambassador on December 1, on the accession of Italy to the London Naval Treaty.

² Printed in Cmd. 5781 (Treaty Series No. 43) of 1938.

³ Printed in Cmd. 5561 (Treaty Series No. 36) of 1937.

(viii)

Letter from Dr. von Selzam to Mr. Perowne (Received February 15)

(No. A 473)

[A 1266/24/45]

LONDON, February 8, 1939

Dear Mr. Perowne,

In reply to your letter—No. A. 517/24/45—of February 2¹ addressed to Schlitter I am sending you herewith a short memorandum giving the opinion of my Government with regard to the suggested advance notification and exchange of information between all Powers who are signatory either of the London Naval Treaty 1936 or bilateral naval agreements subsequently concluded.

Yours sincerely,

E. VON SELZAM

¹ Not printed. This letter, sent to those recipients of Mr. Holman's letter of November 29 (Document (v) in this Appendix) from whom a reply had not been received, inquired whether the views of the Governments concerned were yet available.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (viii)

(Translation)

Memorandum

The German Government have carefully considered the proposal set forth in the Foreign Office Note of November 29, 1938,¹ for generalising the exchange of information under Part III of the Naval Agreement in force.

The German Government are, in principle, favourably disposed towards the British proposal and confirm their view expressed on previous occasions. They are, however, of the opinion that—

(1) in such an exchange of information non-essential parts of the naval forces of a Power might be excluded;²

(2) such an exchange of information, if it is to have its full pacifying effect, must embrace all considerable naval Powers; and

(3) between the various Powers who are to participate in the exchange of information, a general atmosphere of greater confidence must be present than is at present, to the regret of the German Government, the case.

The German Government therefore do not yet see any possibility, at present, of taking part in a general exchange of information, such as is proposed by the British Government.

¹ See Document (v) in this Appendix.

² In the original German text of the memorandum this sentence read: 'Bei einem solchen Nachrichtenaustausch nicht wesentliche Teile der Seestreitkräfte einer Macht ausgenommen werden dürfen.'

(ix)

Letter from M. Korj (Soviet Embassy) to Mr. Perowne (Received February 8)

[A 1062/24/45]

February 8, 1939

Dear Mr. Perowne,

In Mr. Cahan's absence on leave I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 2¹ No. A 517/24/45 in which you refer to Mr. Holman's letter of

¹ See Document (viii) in this Appendix, note 1.

November 29² last enclosing a draft Protocol providing for advance notification and the exchange of information between all Powers who are signatories either of the London Naval Treaty 1936 or bilateral naval agreements subsequently concluded by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

I beg to inform you that according to information received from Moscow the Government of the U.S.S.R., after careful consideration of the draft Protocol referred to above, do not see their way to accept the proposals made therein.

Yours sincerely,

M. KORJ
First Secretary.

² See Document (v) in this Appendix, note 1.

(x)

The German Ambassador to Viscount Halifax (Received February 15)

[A 1267/24/45]

(Translation)

(No. A 455)

GERMAN EMBASSY, LONDON, February 14, 1939

My Lord,

In fulfilment of instructions from my Government I have the honour to reply as follows to Your Excellency's Note of June 30, 1938¹ (A 4850/55/45).

The proposal made by the British Government that the European Naval Powers should declare their readiness not to build for the time being any capital ships exceeding 40,000 tons displacement has been carefully studied by the German Government. Consideration of the matter has been delayed by the fact that guns of the maximum calibre of 40.6 cm. fixed by treaty were new in the German Navy and consequently construction plans had first to be prepared to calculate the size of vessel appropriate for them.

In examining the question the German Government were guided by the same considerations as His Britannic Majesty's Government, namely that it is in the interest of all naval Powers not to increase the size of capital ships beyond the dimensions absolutely necessary. The examination of the matter is now concluded. As a result it can be stated that the proposed type of capital ship will be kept within the limits of the size which the British Government, according to their communication, propose to give to the new constructions of the Lion class.

The German Government would, however, in the matter of the size of capital ships, desire to avoid entering into a special formal agreement, departing from the general rule, as they are in principle of the opinion that binding agreements of a qualitative nature in the sphere of naval armament cannot be made regionally but must uniformly include all Powers generally bound by treaty. The German Government express the hope that the British Government may succeed in their efforts to prevent all Powers bound to them by treaty from building capital ships of a size larger than that recognized as appropriate at the moment by them and the German Government. Otherwise a development would commence in the sphere of capital ship construction the consequences of which are unpredictable.

I have, &c.,

V. DIRKSEN

¹ Document (i) in this Appendix.

(xi)

Letter from Mr. Perowne to Dr. von Selzam (German Embassy)

[A 1989/24/45]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 11, 1939

Dear Selzam,

You were good enough to communicate to me on February 8¹ a memorandum indicating the attitude of the German Government towards the proposed Protocol providing for advance notification and exchange of information as regards naval construction between all Powers who are signatories either of the London Naval Treaty, 1936, or bilateral naval agreements subsequently concluded by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, a copy of which was sent to the German Embassy by Holman in his letter A 8664/54/45 of November 29 last.²

Of the Governments consulted at the same time as your Government the French³ and the United States⁴ Governments have both intimated their readiness to accept a Protocol on the lines proposed. The Polish and the Italian Government (who were approached after their accession to the London Naval Treaty) have not so far communicated their views to us. The Soviet Government have however let us know that after careful consideration of the draft Protocol they do not see their way to accept the proposals it embodies.⁵ His Majesty's Government have examined this situation and I am now writing to say that they have come to the conclusion that in view of the Soviet reply and of the fact that your Government also, though sympathetic, do not consider that the time is ripe for such an arrangement to be brought into force, it is advisable to defer further consideration of the project for the time being.

I am writing in similar terms to all those to whom copies of our draft Protocol were sent including Crolla at the Italian Embassy.⁶

(For Mr. Perowne)

J. G. S. BERTH

¹ See Document (viii) in this Appendix.

² Document (v) in this Appendix.

³ See Document (vi) in this Appendix.

⁴ The United States Embassy communicated to the Foreign Office on February 13 copies of a slightly amended draft Protocol which they were prepared to sign.

⁵ See Document (ix) in this Appendix.

⁶ Similar letters, *mutatis mutandis*, were sent on April 11 to the French, United States, Italian, Polish, and Soviet Embassies, and to the Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and India.

APPENDIX VII

Additional Correspondence on the Situation in Memel¹ (December 7–20, 1938)

¹ For reasons of space these documents have been held over from Volume III of this Series.

(i)

Minute by Mr. Collier

[N 6006/2/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, December 7, 1938

The Lithuanian Minister called this afternoon on his return from Kovno, where, he said, it had not yet been finally settled whether he was to be Deputy Prime Minister, as reported in Mr. Preston's telegram No. 51¹ of December 5. He made the following verbal communication on instructions from his Government.

The Lithuanian Government had reason to believe from various items of evidence which they had recently received (and some of which M. Balutis detailed to me) that Herr von Ribbentrop and his advisers had prepared a plan for dealing with the Memel question immediately after the forthcoming Memel elections on December 11. It was not yet certain that this plan had Herr Hitler's approval; but Herr von Ribbentrop was fairly confident of obtaining that.

According to this plan, the Memellanders were to proclaim the 'Anschluss' to Germany immediately after the elections and the German Government would then demand of the Lithuanian Government that they should not only cede the Memeland to Germany but also, in order that the territory should not suffer economically by the transfer, enter into a special German-Lithuanian agreement providing that Lithuanian export trade should still pass through Memel, and containing other conditions intended to bind Germany, Memel and Lithuania together in something like a Customs union. The ultimate object of this plan was to obtain commercial and political control over Lithuania and then to use her as a jumping-off ground for further adventures either in the other Baltic States or against Poland.

The Lithuanian Government, being convinced of the accuracy of this information and having not only a right but also a duty to consult with the Powers signatory to the Memel Convention² if that Convention or the Memel Statute was likely to be infringed, and in view moreover of the serious repercussions which any such *coup* was likely to have on the whole European situation, were consequently appealing to His Majesty's Government and the French Government for advice and, if possible, assistance in dealing with the situation. In view of Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Paris they had already instructed their Minister there to suggest to the French Government that the matter should be mentioned to him before he left Paris; and the Minister had reported that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs

¹ Not printed. This telegram of December 5 reported the reorganization of the Lithuanian Cabinet.

² The Memel Convention of 1924 is published in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 119, p. 502.

was willing to speak to Herr von Ribbentrop if His Majesty's Government for their part expressed the view that this was desirable. The last opportunity for such action would come at the reception to be given this evening to Herr von Ribbentrop, who was leaving the next morning; and the matter was therefore urgent.

I told M. Balutis that this was so grave a communication that I could make no comment on it without authority from the Secretary of State. I would at once take steps, however, to see whether a communication to Paris could be authorised.

When the Minister had left I obtained authority from the Secretary of State to telephone to the Paris Embassy instructing Sir E. Phipps to tell M. Bonnet that Lord Halifax agreed that it would be desirable to speak to Herr von Ribbentrop and hoped he would do so.

The Lithuanian Government's apprehensions are largely justified by our own information. Please see for example N 5941³ and 5996/2/59.⁴

L. COLLIER

³ Not printed. This despatch from Kovno of November 30 reported a speech by the deputy leader of the Memelland Nazi party.

⁴ Not printed. The reference is to a telegram from Kovno of December 6, reporting indirect information of a German project to build a naval base at Memel.

(ii)

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 7, 7.5 p.m.)

No. 389 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 6007/2/59]

PARIS, December 7, 1938

Your telephone message by Mr. Collier of this afternoon.¹

I have not been able to see M. Bonnet who is engaged with Herr von Ribbentrop but I gave your message to M. Jules Henry who will pass it on directly M. Bonnet is free.

M. Henry said that the Lithuanian Minister here has made two *démarches* regarding possible trouble at Memel in connexion with elections there on December 11. He added that M. Bonnet had never agreed to give a warning to Herr von Ribbentrop if His Majesty's Government agreed. French Government has decided merely to make representations to German Government through French Embassy in Berlin.

I urged M. Henry to bring the first sentence of your message to M. Bonnet's immediate and particular notice and he has promised to do so.

Since writing the above I have also brought your message to the notice of M. Léger and urged that M. Bonnet should mention the matter this evening to Herr von Ribbentrop. M. Léger promises to inform M. Bonnet in this sense before the reception.

¹ See Document (i) in this Appendix.

(iii)

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 7, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 53 Telegraphic [N 6013/2/59]

KOVNO, December 7, 1938, 7.45 p.m.

New Minister for Foreign Affairs¹ informed me today point blank that he had information from Germany that, although it had not been finally decided, in-

¹ M. Urbsys.

fluent people in the Nazi party were seriously contemplating taking Memel. Fact that Herr von Ribbentrop had refused to receive the Lithuanian Minister at Berlin and that other representatives at Wilhelmstrasse had failed to give satisfactory reply to his representations only tended to increase Lithuanian Government's suspicion.

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs who seemed very nervous and who was careful to inform me that his unwilling acceptance of the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs was a matter of . . . ,² seemed to fear unpleasant internal reactions if and when Germany's alleged intention *vis-à-vis* Memel becomes known in Lithuania. Repeated to Berlin and Riga.

² The text is here uncertain.

(iv)

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 8, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 393 Telegraphic [N 6027/2/59]

PARIS, December 8, 1938, 1.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 389.¹

I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs about Memel this morning. He has no confirmation of a *coup* coming there and he did not speak to Herr von Ribbentrop about this question which will be raised diplomatically at Berlin or Paris.

¹ Document (ii) in this Appendix.

(v)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 8, 5.35 p.m.)

No. 751 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 6031/2/59]

BERLIN, December 8, 1938

Your despatch No. 1976¹ and my telegram No. 562 Saving.²

I would draw your special attention to Memel during the next few days. It is very likely that forthcoming elections will result in that territory going Nazi like Danzig and it is even possible that there may be a demand for incorporation in the Reich which will be accepted by German Government. It is considered here in well-informed circles that although Lithuania now has a Government more friendly to Germany it is too late to save Memel for Lithuania.

Repeated to Riga.

¹ Not printed. This despatch recorded conversations with the Lithuanian Minister on November 10 and 18.

² Not printed.

(vi)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 10, 11.15 a.m.)

No. 757 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 6058/2/59]

BERLIN, December 10, 1938

My telegram No. 751.¹

Impending elections in Memel are giving rise to stronger rumours that a *coup* there is impending.

¹ Document (v) in this Appendix.

The press reports that the Lithuanian police have been withdrawn and that public order has been entrusted to the German auxiliary police formation. Troops are said to be confined to barracks and the sentries at the gates have been removed. German election propaganda is everywhere in evidence and indications point to a resounding victory for pan-Germanism.

Repeated to Riga and Kovno.

(vii)

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 550 Telegraphic [N 6031/2/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *December 10, 1938, 12.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 751.¹

2. Lithuanian Government have reason to believe that German Minister for Foreign Affairs has prepared plan for Herr Hitler's approval involving 'Anschluss' of Memelland to Germany after elections on December 11 and demand on Lithuania for economic union with Memel and Germany. They have appealed for help to His Majesty's Government and French Government as signatories to Memel Convention, and French Minister for Foreign Affairs though reluctant to mention matter to German Minister for Foreign Affairs in Paris, proposes to make diplomatic representations. My information tends to confirm that some such plan is under discussion and I feel that it cannot be ignored by His Majesty's Government.

3. You should therefore ask French Ambassador to concert with you before taking action. I contemplate identic representations on following lines.

4. There is reason to believe that the Memellanders are planning action inconsistent with the Statute, in observance of which as signatory of the Memel Convention His Majesty's Government are necessarily interested.

5. It is obvious that the German Government are in a position to exert greater influence upon the Memellanders than can be exerted from any other quarter, and therefore His Majesty's Government, as signatory of the Memel Convention, trust that German Government will use their influence with Memellanders to ensure respect for Statute.

6. Moreover, in view of fact that from their respective standpoints German Government and His Majesty's Government cannot fail to be interested in the situation in Memel, His Majesty's Government hope that, having regard to Chamberlain-Hitler declaration, German Government will be prepared to discuss with His Majesty's Government any grievance which they may have against Lithuanian Government in this connexion.

7. I realise that if German Government agree to discussions at all, they may demand cession of Memel. In that case Lithuanian Government would probably submit under protest, but His Majesty's Government and French Government could try to secure that no further demands are made on them.

Repeated to Paris and Kovno.

¹ Document (v) in this Appendix.

(viii)

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 442 Telegraphic [N 6031/2/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *December 10, 1938, 12.15 p.m.*

My telegram to Berlin No. 550.¹

2. Please inform French Government and ask them to co-operate on these lines.
Repeated to Berlin and Kovno.

¹ Document (vii) in this Appendix.

(ix)

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 10, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 56 Telegraphic [N 6059/2/59]

KOVNO, *December 10, 1938, 3.13 p.m.*

Memel German Deputy Leader yesterday told the foreign press correspondents that tomorrow's elections, though not openly held on the question of 'Anschluss', were in fact plebiscite. New Directorate would in January demand complete cultural and economic autonomy and if Lithuanian Government did not agree, question of 'Anschluss' would be raised automatically.

2. Increasing emphasis is being laid on economic questions and it seems economic demands will be incompatible with Lithuanian sovereignty. It would seem that Lithuania is now face to face with danger of losing Memelland.

Repeated to Berlin.

(x)

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 11, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 398 Telegraphic [N 6060/2/59]

PARIS, *December 10, 1938, 10.57 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 442.¹

French Minister for Foreign Affairs agrees and will so instruct French Ambassador in Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin and Kovno.

¹ Document (viii) in this Appendix.

(xi)

Mr. Preston (Kovno) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 12, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 57 Telegraphic [N 6082/2/59]

KOVNO, *December 11, 1938, 7.57 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 22.¹

Today the Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to inform you that his Government had instructed Lithuanian Minister at Berlin to inform the German Govern-

¹ Document (vii) was repeated to Kovno as telegram No. 22.

ment that the Lithuanian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs were ready at any time to proceed to Berlin to discuss the current questions.

2. Referring to the subject raised in paragraph 2 of your telegram under reference the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he did not know whether His Majesty's Government and French Government intended to make representations in Berlin or not, but that if they did, he hoped that they would be careful not to say that they were doing so at the request of the Lithuanian Government or that Lithuania was the source of their information. He feared otherwise that the full force of German intractability would be vented on Lithuania.

Repeated to Berlin.

(xii)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received December 11, 11.0 p.m.)

No. 758 Telegraphic [N 6069/2/59]

BERLIN, December 11, 1938, 9.51 p.m.

Your telegram No. 550.¹

I have concerted with French Ambassador and we will act tomorrow December 12.

As the French Ambassador's instructions explicitly preclude him from mentioning Franco-German declaration, our identic representations will take the form of a *note verbale* on the lines of paragraphs 4 and 5 and the first half of paragraph 6 leading to statement that His Majesty's Government is ready to consult with German Government for any purpose which would appear useful.

Text by air mail December 12.²

Repeated to Paris and Kovno.

¹ Document (vii) in this Appendix.

² Document (xvi) in this Appendix.

(xiii)

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 552 Telegraphic: by telephone [N 6069/2/59]

FOREIGN OFFICE, December 12, 1938, 1.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 758.¹

I do not understand reasons for French Ambassador's instructions, and I should prefer to maintain text of our Note. Representations would thus be similar and simultaneous.

Repeated to Paris and Kovno.

¹ Document (xii) in this Appendix.

(xiv)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received December 12, 5.50 p.m.)

No. 759 *Telegraphic* [N 6094/2/59].

BERLIN, December 12, 1938, 4.52 p.m.

My telegram No. 758.¹

By subsequent request of French Ambassador, my representation took the form of *aide-mémoire* which I left with Under-Secretary of State this morning. French Ambassador is doing likewise.

The only comment made by Under-Secretary of State was that all was quiet in Memel and he did not think any international consultation was necessary, nevertheless German Government reserved their reply.

Repeated to Riga, Kovno and Paris.

¹ Document (xii) in this Appendix.

(xv)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received December 12, 5.20 p.m.)

No. 761 *Telegraphic*: by telephone [N 6095/2/59]

BERLIN, December 12, 1938

Your telegram No. 552.¹

In your telegram No. 550² you instructed me to concert with French Ambassador and make identic representations.

I immediately called on him and showed him your text which I proposed to deliver personally in form of a *note verbale*. He in return showed me his instructions which expressly precluded him from making any mention of Franco-German Paris Declaration. In support of this he expressed opinion that it was undesirable to expose both the Paris and Munich Declarations to certainty of a rebuff and that they should only be invoked when there was a prospect of a concrete and successful result. He also wished to substitute for last half of your telegram No. 550 the formula that our Governments 'are ready to consult the German Government for any purpose which would appear useful'. Otherwise he accepted our text although he was reluctant to leave anything in writing and wanted to mention Memel quite casually amongst other subjects.

This morning at the last moment he sent his Counsellor to me with a message to the effect that he saw objection even to a *note verbale* and preferred an *aide-mémoire* without any heading. I saw his text which was addressed 'Office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs'.

You will see from my telegram No. 759³ that action had already been taken before receipt of your telegram under reference.

To have maintained our text in its entirety would not have secured assent of French Ambassador and therefore would not have been identic representation.

If you wish me to do so I can return to the charge with the German Government

¹ Document (xiii) in this Appendix.

² Document (vii) in this Appendix.

³ Document (xiv) in this Appendix.

but unless his instructions are strengthened I do not think French Ambassador would do likewise.

In general whatever action we take about Memel I fear we will receive a rebuff. Text of my communication leaving by air mail tonight in my despatch No. 1346.⁴ Repeated to Paris and Kovno.

⁴ Document (xvi) in this Appendix.

(xvi)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 14)

No. 1346 [N 6139/2/59]

BERLIN, December 12, 1938

His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of his *note-verbale* of December 12 to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding Memel.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (xvi)

1. There is reason to believe that the Memellanders are planning action inconsistent with the *status quo*, in the observance of which as a signatory of the Memel Convention His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are necessarily interested.

2. It is obvious that the German Government are in a position to exert greater influence upon the Memellanders than can be exerted from any other quarter and therefore His Majesty's Government as a signatory of the Memel Convention trust that the German Government will use their influence with the Memellanders to ensure respect for the *status quo*.

3. Moreover, in view of the fact that from their respective standpoints the German Government and His Majesty's Government cannot fail to be interested in the situation in Memel, His Majesty's Government are ready to consult with the German Government for any purpose which would appear useful.

(xvii)

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 13, 2.15 p.m.)

No. 401 Telegraphic [N 6127/2/59]

PARIS, December 13, 1938, 1.25 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 758¹ and your telegram No. 552 to Berlin.²

In the course of conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning I mentioned instructions received by French Ambassador.

M. Bonnet replied that French Government thought it better to base their representations to German Government on Statute of Memel rather than on Franco-German declaration, which may have to be invoked before long on other subjects such as the Ukraine.

Repeated to Berlin and Kovno.

¹ Document (xii) in this Appendix.

² Document (xiii) in this Appendix.

(xviii)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received December 13, 8.45 p.m.)
No. 763 Telegraphic [N 6131/2/59]

BERLIN, December 13, 1938, 8.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 759.¹

Press have been given hint by Ministry of Propaganda that visit of my French colleague and of myself to Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday was not to make representations about Memel but on purely routine matters.

Present impression is that subject to unforeseen occurrences union with the Reich will not take place before the meeting of Memel Diet in the middle of January.

Repeated to Paris, Riga and Kovno.

¹ Document (xiv) in this Appendix.

(xix)

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received December 16)
No. 1361 [N 6188/2/59]

BERLIN, December 14, 1938

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 761¹ of December 12, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a copy of the communication made by the French Ambassador to the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs on December 12 on the subject of Memel.

2. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Paris and Kovno.

I have, &c.,
(for H.M. Chargé d'Affaires)
ADRIAN HOLMAN

¹ Document (xv) in this Appendix.

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (xix)

(Communicated by French Embassy).

BERLIN, le 12 décembre 1938

Le Gouvernement français a reçu des informations qui lui donnent à craindre que certains éléments de la population de Memel ne préparent une action incompatible avec le Statut, dont la France, comme Puissance signataire, ne saurait se désintéresser.

Le Gouvernement français ne doute pas que le gouvernement allemand, dont l'action auprès de ces éléments serait sans doute particulièrement efficace, n'use de son influence pour les amener à respecter le Statut du Territoire.

Il est prêt, pour sa part, à participer de concert avec le Gouvernement allemand à toute consultation qui pourrait paraître utile.

À L'OFFICE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES,
BERLIN

(xx)

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 560 Telegraphic [N 6094/2/59]

December 20, 1938, 4.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 761.¹

You need say nothing more at present.

Repeated to Paris and Kovno.

¹ Document (xv) in this Appendix.

(K 16)

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